

# COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

ACM Aggregation AJAX Analytics Blogs  
Capacity Building Collaboration Collective Intelligence  
**Community Media 2.0**

Content Management Systems Email Free Speech  
Fundraising Hubs Mobile Active  
Network-centric Online Media Open Source  
Open Networks Participatory Culture Podcasting  
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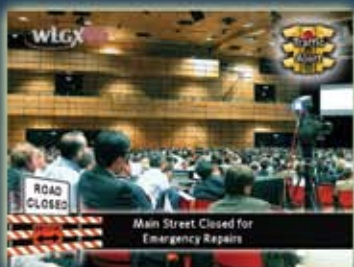
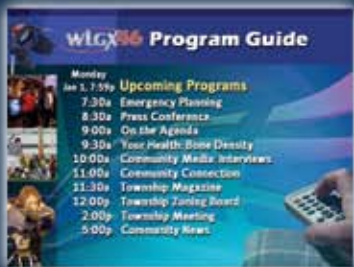


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## About the Cover

In keeping with the theme of this issue, the cover depicts a **tag cloud**. As defined in Wikipedia:

A tag cloud (or weighted list in visual design) can be used as a visual depiction of content tags used on a website. Often, more frequently used tags are depicted in a larger font or otherwise emphasized, while the displayed order is generally alphabetical. Thus, both finding a tag by alphabet and by popularity is possible. Selecting a single tag within a tag cloud will generally lead to a collection of items that are associated with that tag.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag\\_cloud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag_cloud)

This tag cloud displays key terms used throughout this issue of *Community Media Review*.



# COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

## Community Media 2.0

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**Spring 2007**  
**Volume 30, Number 1**

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Alliance Board of Directors 7

Word War 3.5 9  
by *Anthony Riddle*

Slack and Nimble 11  
by *Mike Wassenaar*

Community Media 2.0 13  
by *Lauren-Glenn Davitian & Kari Peterson*

### Section I. Same Role, New Era

Community Building in the Digital Age 14

You: Connector, Hub and Social Networker 15  
by *Lauren-Glenn Davitian*

Community Media Centers as Hubs 17  
by *Sean Effel*

### Section II. Same Challenges, New Strategy

Strategic Communications Planning 19

Smart Chart 2.0: A New and Improved Tool  
to Help Nonprofits Make Smart Communications Choices 19  
by *SPIN Project and Spitfire Strategies*

Evaluating Your Communications Effectiveness 22

The Challenge to Evolve 23  
by *Kari Peterson*

Telling the Community Media Story 26

10 Tips for Storytelling 27  
by *Klaus Fog*

Excellence in Storytelling 28

### Section III. Same Mission, New Tools

Building Communities Online 29

Use Your Social Networks to Build Online Communities 30

Power from the People: Assessing the New Online Participatory Tools 31  
by *Colin Delany*

The Case for Content Management Systems 35

CMS Explained 36

Free as in Speech: Tools for the Next Revolution 38  
by *Felicia Sullivan*

The Email Savvy Organization 40  
by *Michael C. Gilbert*

Analytics for the Little Guys 42  
by *Daniell Krawczyk*

Let Your Values Be Your Guide 43  
by *Jennifer Harris*

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*As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, Community Media Review shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.*

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## Word War 3.5

by Anthony Riddle

*"The emergence of information technology has presented endless possibilities for match-ups involving various old and new technologies and among new and advanced technologies. Countless facts have demonstrated that the integrated use of technology is able to promote social progress more than even the discovery of the technology."*

THIS QUOTE IS NOT FROM the blog of a Silicon Valley hippie, but from "Unrestricted Warfare" a 1999 analysis of U.S. military and new technology by two Chinese colonels.

They examine the U.S. military and its use of new technologies. The specific technologies are not important. What is important, according to these experts, is the way that the many technologies are being *integrated* in their use. They note that the military has the same tendency most of us do: to view each new technology as fundamentally *replacing* the old, and that this tendency is a trap that can block our stride toward success. They say that what is really important is how new technologies can be combined with old.

They declare the single most important aspect of new information/communications technology is the way that it *integrates* all other technology – old and new.

What does this mean for the Alliance and for community media?

Look at the wonderful opportunities presented by the technologies in this issue of *Community Media Review*. The presentations only scratch the surface of the possibilities for your PEG community. The truth is, however wonderful each is on its own, none can find its true potential unless *integrated into your existing resources*.

- How does a cable-based live program drive an audience to your blog?
- How can a blog be used to add to your viewership?
- Can a website offer in-depth materials to viewers who became interested in a topic?
- Can we share program materials electronically, quickly between producers and PEG centers?
- Can these tools organize our communities politically?

Many uses of technology described in this issue come from origins other than PEG. They do not and cannot possibly consider the resources you already have in hand: staff; video equipment; big, real-time pipes into the home; a well-trained, active community of producers; pre-existing video libraries; viewers; an organized community of support; and a history of community media service.

With any new technology, consider how its integration can enhance current practice. The analysis above notes that the most important approach to any conflict is that of combining. Combining is the use of one technique with another to multiply the power and effect of both. Like paper with pen. According to these colonels, change in earlier days was marked by full reliance on new technology. The future is in the full integration of high and low technology.

*How much better is a camera when combined with an edit system ... and an editor? With an RSS feed, a weekly program, a streamed clip, a tag?*


"We can do bells!" an Alliance member once shouted.

New questions are implied in this *CMR*. Don't assume that all the questions or answers are provided. We must choose the next step. What percentage of your PEG resources could be dedicated to the new tools and training needed by our communities? Consider the value in repurposing our video for media other than cable channels. Determine what investments in new media can be combined with our existing bandwidth to multiply its value to the community.

The Alliance community is engaged in a conflict of visions for the communities in which we live and work. No telecom company should impose a technology strategy for your community from the outside. You know the cultural needs of your community. Accept these ideas presented as opportunities to meet the unique needs of your community.

Quoting again from our two (not so) hippie colonels:

*"The situation of loud solo parts is in the process of being replaced by a multi-part chorus. The general fusion of technology is irreversibly guiding the rising globalization trend, while the globalization trend in turn is accelerating the process of the general fusion of technology, and this is the basic characteristic of our age."*

Peace out, dude. 



Anthony Riddle is the executive director of the Alliance for Community Media.

Anthony can be reached at [raiseeveryvoice@yahoo.com](mailto:raiseeveryvoice@yahoo.com)

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# Slack and Nimble

by Mike Wassenaar

MARTIN KEARNS is a community organizer who works on environmental issues. In the last few years, he's worked on media campaigns through a group he formed called Green Media Toolshed ([www.greenmediatoolshed.org](http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org)). He's seen a host of changes in communications and politics in the United States in the last decade, and he's come up with a set of variables that describes successful organizing networks – groups of people who get things done – whether it be a presidential campaign, a grassroots fundraiser to stop cancer, or a support society for Pug breeders and aficionados (no joke).

Kearns' essential elements of a successful network are:

- strong social ties
- rich communications grid
- common story
- shared resources
- clarity of purpose

What's laid out in this edition of *Community Media Review* are the elements for two of Kearns' areas: the emerging technical tools that make up a rich communications grid of which access centers and television producers can take advantage, and the potential shared resources that can strengthen the individual work in communities across the United States. You will find tools to use and directions to think about in this issue that make our work in community media more rich and varied.

What about the social elements in the list? Well, that's where the title of this essay comes in. They all take time, money, or a combination of the two. Building strong social ties in your community, within your organization, or across the country takes time. Developing clarity of purpose takes human resources and the time to concentrate and listen. The same

thing is true for building a common narrative that resonates with people within and outside our profession.

Most PEG operations need more slack to do just this work. The concept of "organizational slack" comes from a recent article by Woods Bowman in the *Non-Profit Quarterly*. Like a rope that is pulled too taut, organizations that live hand-to-mouth have no ability to adapt, take advantage of opportunities, and grow in times of profound – or mundane – change. Bowman argues we need more slack, more metaphorical room to breathe, think and build, to be effective.

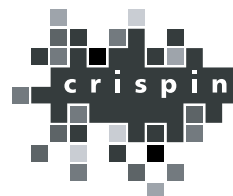
So, as you look at this edition, think about the tools that are becoming available to build community media presence, and then work to build the capacity for all our communities to take advantage of them.

Get Slack. Be Nimble. Let's build an effective network. **cMr**



**Mike Wassenaar** is the executive director of Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, and is the chair of the national board of the Alliance for Community Media.

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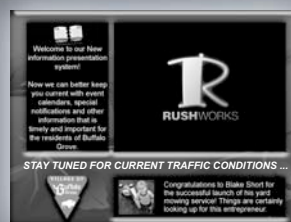


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# Community Media 2.0

by *Lauren-Glenn Davitian & Kari Peterson*

**T**HE GROUND IS SHIFTING BENEATH US. We are entering a new communications era, an era dubbed by some as “web 2.0.” More content is moving to the internet. “On-demand” media is growing by leaps and bounds. Consumers are spending less time on their couches watching TV and more time on the move with mobile media devices. Anyone with a digital camera can produce and post their own media for a global audience. And, nearly a quarter of the nation’s internet users say they participate in online social networks.

What does all this mean for public access channels and community media centers (CMCs)? This issue of *CMR* addresses the questions that arise as we shift from our well-worn

“TV-centric” (one-to-many) model to a “network-centric” (many-to-many) model of communications and social influence.

We believe the answers to those questions lie within our deep pockets of community relationships, our ability to help people tell their stories, and our abiding knowledge of media production and distribution tools. “Community Media 2.0” is dedicated to all of the CMCs willing to build on these pillars to ensure public access in their communities, and free speech and open networks for everyone.

In Section I, we discuss the value and importance of the many personal relationships CMCs have cultivated over the years. When we view our centers as “hubs” that bring together all kinds of people, we

are better able to invite them to participate – to watch, produce, volunteer, donate and tell-a-friend about new programs, events, action alerts and more.

It is not hard to build and mobilize a solid network of access supporters and participants, but it requires planning. In

Section II, we get specific about how to plan our communications strategy. CMCs need to think “smart” about goals, the values of the people we serve, and the most effective channels of communications.

In Section III, we look more closely at these new “channels.” Traditional communication strategies – public events, press releases, public access programs – are now amplified

by web 2.0 tools. But how can we use e-newsletters, video blogs, RSS feeds, and various social networking applications to support community building, free speech and public access?

Throughout this issue, we present case studies of CMCs whose intrepid leaders are boldly venturing into new territory and, by example, showing us the way. Their experiences will inform our own progress as we move into a world of new platforms, tools, and new attitudes and opportunities around media. If we are to continue to serve as “trusted providers” of community media services in the web 2.0 era, we must leverage the power of our human networks and the new generation of digital, online tools. **cMr**

*“Web 2.0 describes internet tools designed to promote social exchange. This issue of Community Media Review is about how community media centers and their members can use these tools to amplify their work and make social change happen.”*



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# Section I. Same Role, New Era

## COMMUNITY BUILDING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

"Web 1.0 was about commerce.  
Web 2.0 is about people."

~ Ross Mayfield,  
Socialtext

"Embracing the future is a mind set more than anything. Moving into the world of new media – some call it web 2.0 – requires that we do three things: (1) welcome change as an essential part of growth, and necessary to remain viable and relevant, even though it may be intimidating or anxiety provoking; (2) connect with our core purpose and use that to guide us; the rest will fall into place; and (3) learn as much as we can about new media, become experts; after all, our communities are counting on us to be just that."

~ Richard Turner,  
executive director,  
Access Montgomery

SINCE WE LAUNCHED PUBLIC ACCESS television channels with video port-a-packs in the late 1970s, the work of community media has been to tell stories, nurture relationships, and build communities. A central point of "Community Media 2.0" is that our traditional role prepares us well to move into the future. As we learn in this section, hubs and connectors are the building blocks of digital media and communications.

*Time Magazine* has proclaimed the emergence of a new participatory culture of media. As community media practitioners, we've long understood and been at the heart of a "participatory media culture." But this question must be asked: How do we re-

main a relevant resource for media making when people are making and sharing media with their laptops and cell phones? What is the value of a community media center?

How will we continue to harness the power of people as connectors to larger networks of viewers, supporters, producers and activists and what steps shall we take to strengthen our position as hubs of community building? What is the best way to use web-based tools to strengthen our human networks and, ultimately, mobilize them in sup-

port of free speech, public access and open networks? The good news is: the fundamental design of community media supports our transformation. **cMr**

*"In many ways, 2.0 proponents are speaking our language, and depicting a new era based on our goals, a society rich in collaboration, diverse points of view, and access to storytelling tools."*

~ Jeremy O'Neal,  
Web Refocus,  
NAMAC

### *In 2006, People Took Media Into Their Own Hands*

When the ever-iconic Person of the Year was announced by *Time Magazine* in January 2007, community media makers raised their collective eyebrows. When the editors announced that "YOU" have "seized the reins of media" and are "framing the new digital democracy," those of us working in the "people's media" understood that popular culture had finally caught up to the "user-generated content" we've been producing and cultivating for more than three decades.

But the media tide *has* turned. Citizen journalism, the exponential growth of blogging as an individual and organizational past-time, the posting of millions of *YouTube* videos along with the emergence of *MySpace*-like social networking sites are redefining our me-

dia and social landscape. *Time Magazine* confirmed that we are officially in a new digital culture – characterized by participation, sharing and interaction – a culture where everyone can become a media maker, and a contributor to the electronic discourse.

*Time* says that this is "a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before." Community media has a vital role in the new landscape. We have experience bringing all of the "yous" together into meaningful communities of "us." We bring public access values – needed now more than ever. At the same time, we are challenged to learn and integrate new digital tools and ways of working with the community building we do so well.



*TIME Person of the Year 2006*

*Time Magazine* © 2007,  
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# You: Connector, Hub and Social Networker

by Lauren-Glenn Davitian

AT MIDNIGHT ON APRIL 18, 1775, three horsemen galloped through the towns of Lexington, Concord, Lincoln and Cambridge, Massachusetts to mobilize American patriots to fight the advancing British army. But in the history of the American Revolution, Paul Revere is the messenger we remember. One of the main reasons for this, argues Malcolm Gladwell in *THE TIPPING POINT* (2000), is that Paul Revere (silversmith and community activist) was well known within a large circle of family, friends, neighbors and collaborators. Gladwell describes him as a “connector” – a person who knew large numbers of people and was in the habit of making introductions.

Today’s connectors use electronic tools to mobilize their social networks. They are human “hubs” who communicate through email, text messaging, RSS feeds and virtual worlds. They share digital voice mails, pictures, and videos that gallop down high speed networks. Instead of horses, connectors use electronic tools to maintain existing ties, strengthen them, and forge new ones. These modern connectors have been defined as the social equivalent of a computer network hub, and play a critical role in today’s networked society.



Paul Revere’s ride

In 2007, it is almost redundant to describe the impact of the internet, high speed connections and handheld digital devices on how we work and entertain ourselves. Clearly these are technological marvels. But the *real* change is that we have *all* become connectors – capable of using our own social networks (each of us relies on at least 50 people for important decisions) and the new generation of collaborative internet tools (aka web 2.0) to do more than research information. Each of us is now able to participate in a large electronic discussion that weaves together our “off-line” experiences. The power of the individual to

work with others and make change happen has moved to an entirely new scale and it is essential for us, as community media makers and nonprofit leaders, to consider its implications. **CMR**

“Community building talent is the single most precious resource in the modern world.”

~ Peter Drucker

## Convergence Culture

“The term ‘participatory culture’ is intended to contrast with older notions of media spectatorship. In this emerging media system, what might traditionally be understood as media producers and consumers are transformed into participants who are expected to interact with each other according to a new set of rules which none of us fully understands. Convergence does not occur through media appliances – however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers.”

~ Henry Jenkins,  
CONVERGENCE CULTURE:  
WHERE OLD AND  
NEW MEDIA COLLIDE

[www.henryjenkins.org/2006/06/welcome\\_to\\_convergence\\_culture.html](http://www.henryjenkins.org/2006/06/welcome_to_convergence_culture.html)

## How Everything is Connected to Everything Else

“Lately, hubs are enjoying exceptional attention ... Every four years the United States inaugurates a new social hub – the President. Indeed, Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s appointment book had about 22,000 names in it, making him one of the biggest hubs of his era. The attention to hubs is well deserved. Hubs are special. They dominate the structure of all networks in which they are present, making them look like small worlds. Indeed, with links to an unusually large number of nodes, hubs create short paths between any two

nodes in the system. Consequently, while the average separation between two randomly selected people on Earth is six, the distance between anybody and a connector is often only one or two. Similarly, while two pages on the web are nineteen clicks away, *Yahoo.com*, a giant hub, is reachable from most web pages in two to three clicks. From the perspective of the hubs, the world is very tiny.”

~ Albert-Laszlo Barabasi,  
scientist/author

## Internet and Society

The internet has fostered transformation in community, from densely knit villages and neighborhoods, to more sparsely knit social networks. Because individuals – rather than households – are separately connected, the internet and the cell phone have transformed communication from house-to-house to person-to-person. There is “networked individualism”: Rather than relying on a single community for social capital, individuals often must actively seek out a variety of appropriate people and resources for different situations.

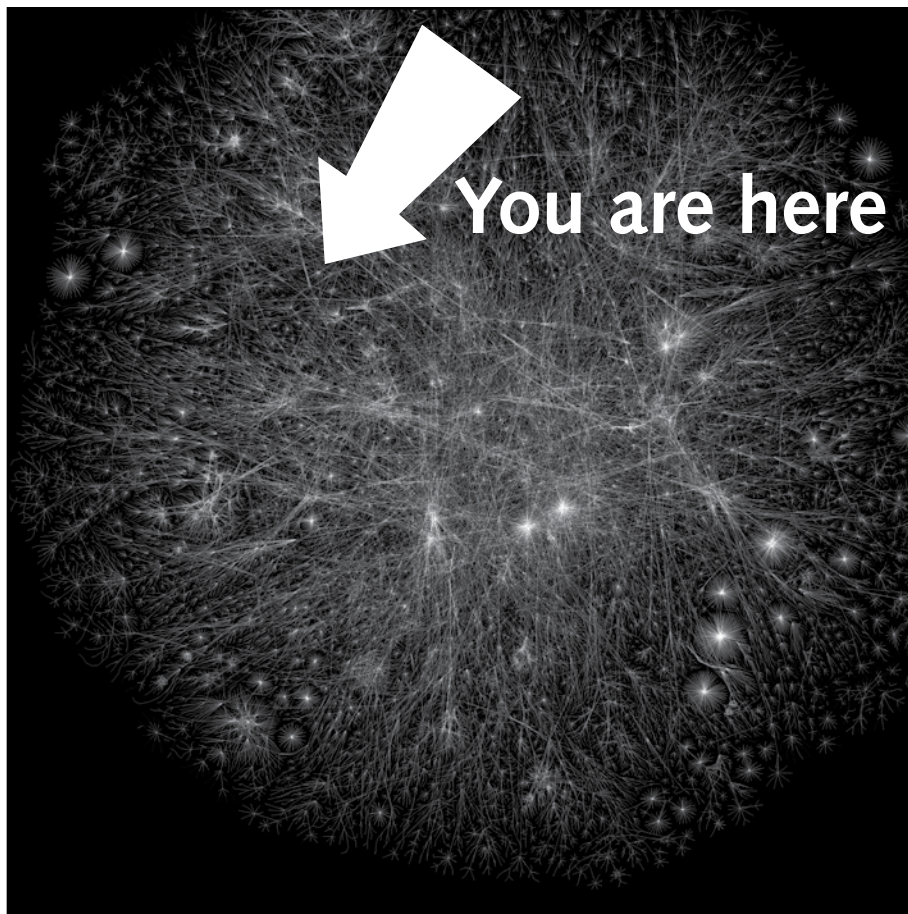
 **Pew Center for  
Internet and Society,**  
January 2006

### *The Strength of Internet Ties - Pew Study*

“We live in a networked society. Most Americans maintain 200 personal relationships. We turn to these ties for trusted information and help when we need it. The Pew Study specifies that we maintain clusters of close relationships with an average of 27 people (core ties) and very close relationships with 23 people (significant ties). Our relatives (35%), neighbors (9%), friends (24%), co-workers (12%), “near-by” and “far away” influence the key decisions of our lives: where to live, what to do with our money, how to find a new job, which PC to buy, how to fix the house, where to seek medical treatment, and whom to vote for.

“We communicate with these core and significant ties in person and, frequently, using landlines, cell phones and email. Increasingly, we exchange text messages, pictures, audio files and videos of all lengths. Contrary to the view of a population of ‘lonely bowlers’ and isolated/alienated internet users, the research demonstrates that the internet enables people to ‘maintain existing ties, often to strengthen them and at times to forge new ties.’ Email allows people to get help from their social networks, and the web lets them gather information and find support and information as they face important decisions.”

[www.pewinternet.org/  
PPF/r/172/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/172/report_display.asp)



Networks – human and electronic – bear many of the same features. In a networked society, the hub becomes a critical cluster of commerce, culture and social influence. This static picture of the internet illustrates an emerging understanding of networks. A network consists of nodes and links that connect the nodes. Hub-based networks have a high degree of connectivity. As you can see in this image, a few “mega hubs” emerge through which you can reach many of the nodes within the network. This model (demonstrated in systems that range from brain chemistry, to ecosystems, to the distribution of gossip) can inform our work as we design community media centers and nonprofit organizations of the future.

This static picture of the internet was taken in November 2003. It can be found at [www.opte.org/maps](http://www.opte.org/maps), and is used with a Creative Commons (Attribution/NonCommercial/ShareAlike) License.

# Community Media Centers as Hubs

by Sean Effel

**A**CCCESS TELEVISION and the community media movement are facing a very interesting and transformative technology age. Without a doubt, our organizations and communities are negotiating a whole new mass media landscape, yet our roles in our communities remain utterly the same.

Despite breathtaking technology and whiz-bang new applications, there is still one asset that we access centers offer to which the technology market cannot hold a candle. We are pieces within real communities overflowing with a richness of local color and history; we are in a position to tease out meaningful interactions and facilitate discussions within our cities in a way that no corporate service would dare.

Cambridge is a city with some of the most prestigious universities in the nation. We are the biotech corporation capital of the world, our streets are flooded with educated young people sporting some of the hottest new technology gadgets in stores, and yet we face the same issues as many other cities and towns. Our residents are climbing the walls in search of meaningful, personal relationships with their communities that will enrich their experiences living in our city and make their own perspectives part of the public discourse.

Our members are looking for ways to group, rally, bond and commiserate on the reflections of their every day lives here in Cambridge and, based on this need, we have created more opportunities for our residents to connect directly with each other.

Our members are indeed looking for meaningful personal relationships with our community and, of course, there is no way a sophisticated website is going to be a substitute. Our community does not need or want another version of *MySpace* in the neighborhood, and while email and social networking websites are excellent methods for information and documentation, we have learned that electronic resources are best used to *supplement* our real world community building in Cambridge.

Our most successful programs in Cambridge have been experiential programs with group interaction and issue orientation built into the core. (See below for examples.)

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*“If we can’t bring together real people to make media and discuss it, to examine issues and address them, or to share ideas and foster them, then we lose the one thing that sets the access movement apart from the rest of the mass media market.”*

## Case Study: Cambridge Community Television

Over the past two years, in recognition of the importance of the internet as a growing source of information and entertainment, CCTV has made a commitment to significantly expand its web presence.

Currently, programming on Channel 9 is streamed live on CCTV’s website. In addition to the live stream, videos are available for on-demand viewing and download. [www.cctvcambridge.org/node/214/play](http://www.cctvcambridge.org/node/214/play)

In Fall of 2006, CCTV unveiled a Cambridge Media Map on its website featuring short documentaries about events and locations across the city. We developed a new workshop, Zip Docs, to feed content to the map. [www.cctvcambridge.org/map/node](http://www.cctvcambridge.org/map/node)

Cambridge is a city of over 100,000 residents, yet we have no daily newspaper nor commercial television station. An important goal for 2007 is to establish our website as a primary portal for local information and

a tool to foster activism and involvement in civic life in the city. In addition to content about CCTV news and events and user blogs, our website aggregates Cambridge-based submissions to *blip.tv* and *YouTube*, and RSS feeds from other sources of Cambridge information.

“Neighbor to Neighbor” is a new project to embed citizen journalists in the city’s five neighborhoods to create media for CCTV’s channels and website. In addition to providing information about local issues and events, the project will utilize the web to promote opportunities for civic participation, such as blogs and listservs.

By creating a synergy between CCTV’s channels and website, CCTV hopes to broaden civic engagement and involvement in critical local issues.

~ Susan Fleischmann,  
executive director



## Web 2.0, Media Arts, and Community Media

In his article written for the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC), Jeremy O'Neal makes a very compelling case for the role of media arts and community media centers in the web 2.0 era. He makes these points:

- The picture of a web-driven information democracy has been on people's minds since the first web page went up in 1991.
- Web 2.0 is a term that describes the widespread development and adoption of technologies and services designed to increase participation, collaboration, and once again, the democratization of information.
- In his definitive introduction to web 2.0, Tim O'Reilly writes of an "implicit 'architecture of participation,' a built-in ethic of cooperation, in which the service acts primarily as an intelligent broker, connecting the edges to each other and harnessing the power of the users themselves." He is talking about a piece of technology but could be describing a fundamental philosophy of the 2.0 era. He could also be paraphrasing the mission statements of any number of media arts organizations, intent as we are on "connecting the edges" of media culture.

~ Web Refocus,  
by Jeremy O'Neal  
NAMAC Newsletter,  
Fall/Winter 2006  
online at [www.namac.org](http://www.namac.org)  
in the Hot Topics section

We have created new training experiences for our community that reflect the trends and needs of the new technologies they may be using. More so than ever before, our technology market is moving so fast that many of our members have their own computers, cameras, edit systems and more in the comfort of their own homes. They even have access to a world wide web filled with how-to's and tutorials, and technically have very little need for the services we have to offer. But what the internet cannot teach you about blogging and podcasting, you may learn at CCTV instead. We develop training programs to fill these gaps with instruction by real people in a class filled with other individuals with similar interests.

What access continues to offer, like access has been offering for decades, is community and local voice and a physical and conceptual space for residents to come together. Fostering and developing local voices must be on the front burner throughout any of the work we do in our communities, and indeed community building should be the focus of any technology program offered in our access centers. If we can't bring together real people

to make media and discuss it, to examine issues and address them, or to share ideas and foster them, then we lose the one thing that sets the access movement apart from the rest of the mass media market. The fact that *YouTube* and *Google Video* are overwhelmed with nine-second clips of teenagers falling down and housecats chasing laser pointers is an indication that our nation has powerful media making tools at its fingertips. It is still our job in the access world to help our communities focus and rally to make media that really matters **cMr**

*“Nonprofit organizations have an edge because they have a cause, particularly voluntary nonprofits where the nature of the participants tends to promote rather than inhibit collaboration and sharing. With some off-centered thinking and the application of social software, nonprofits have the potential to evolve into movements.”*

~ Leon Benjamin  
[www.winningbysharing.net](http://www.winningbysharing.net)

### *Do You Have What It Takes to Be a Leader in the 2.0 Era?*

According to Marty Kearns, a leader in the "networked world:"

- has a high tolerance for ambiguity
- is comfortable with chaos
- has a relaxed, friendly demeanor
- has the ability to focus on policy and getting people to work together
- encourages support staff and volunteers to act like administrators
- starts with an ennobling purpose
- establishes a democratic community where individuals are equals
- enables all participants in the organization to contribute; uses structure and management only to honor the community purpose
- assumes good intentions

- supports learners and a learning culture
- remembers that communities (including staff) are social entities
- implements a decision-making process that is less bureaucratic, more open and flexible
- values good data about constituents and target audiences

~ Green Media Toolshed ([www.greenmediatoolshed.org](http://www.greenmediatoolshed.org)) builds and strengthens the communications infrastructure for the environmental movement. Kearns, its executive director, is a respected leader, strategist, and pioneer in advocating network-centric principals in social change work.

# Section II. Same Challenges, New Strategy

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTERS have serious work to do. As we accept the premise of Section I – that we are in a new communications era – and as we survey the new tools presented in Section III, community media centers (CMCs) have some questions to ask:


- Do we know who all of our audiences are? What people and organizations can benefit from community media services? Who supports media democracy? Who are our potential members, supporters and advocates?
- Do we understand the needs of our various audiences? What is important to them? Are we serving them well? Are we the go-to source for information and resources? Are we relevant and are we meeting their needs?
- Are we reaching our various audiences with our message? Are people aware of us? Do they know what we do, what we stand for?
- Are we involving people and organizations as media makers? Are we empowering them? Helping them tell their stories?

- Are we building our base of support? Are we growing our memberships, our supporters, advocates, and funding base?

The bottom line is this: are we being as effective as we can be?

Strategic communications planning is about looking within. It is about evaluating the way we communicate, the way we tell our story. If we are effective in our communications, we will reach, involve and serve more people. We will grow our base of users and supporters. These are key as we strive to meet our mission and to build community support for our work and movement.

The purpose of strategic communications planning is to help CMCs do a better job of meeting their mission. Strategic communication becomes that larger framework for CMCs; it helps us to focus our storytelling for the greatest social impact.

What follows is an overview of strategic communications planning. Equipped with a plan, we can make better decisions about how to integrate our work in cable TV with the new generation of online tools. 

“Communications planning looks at how you communicate with your various audiences: clients, supporters, contributors, media contacts, vendors, distributors, employees and others upon whom your organization relies to succeed. An effective communications plan reflects your organization’s mission, goals and objectives, and is integrated into daily operations. So a communications plan informs everything from the content of your website to the frequency of your contacts with local newspapers.”

SPIN Project

## Smart Chart 2.0: A New and Improved Tool to Help Nonprofits Make Smart Communications Choices

by SPIN Project and Spitfire Strategies

THE PURPOSE OF a strategic communications plan is to integrate all the organization’s programs, public education and advocacy efforts. By planning a long-term strategy for your efforts, you will be positioned to be more proactive and strategic, rather than consistently reacting to the existing environment. The strategic plan will help you deploy resources more effectively and strategically by highlighting synergies and shared opportunities in your various programs and work areas.

Based on recommendations from our partners at the SPIN Project, there are

five major strategic decision points for you to consider as you undertake strategic communications planning:

- program decisions (goal, decision maker, success measures)
- context (internal and external scans)
- strategic choices (audience, message and messenger)
- communications objectives
- tactics

You will find it helpful to put together a team of people to work on your strategic

Special thanks to Laura Saponara ([laura@spinproject.org](mailto:laura@spinproject.org)) of the SPIN Project and Spitfire Strategies ([www.spitfirestrategies.com](http://www.spitfirestrategies.com)) for permission to repurpose their “Smart Chart 2.0.” The SPIN Project works with social justice organizations to implement communications strategies for social change. They develop communications skills, infrastructure and leadership through tutorials, publications and direct consulting. The SPIN Project website ([spinproject.org](http://spinproject.org)) is a valuable site for all organizations with a social change objective.

“A communications plan is an important part of an organization’s daily operation. As a living document, it frames media activities, including internal and external communications, clarifies the organization’s priorities, target audiences, resources and staff assignments.”

≈ The ABC’S of  
Strategic Communications  
[www.gse.harvard.edu/  
~hfrp/eval/issue16/  
sparks.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval/issue16/sparks.html)

communications planning. It is important to have executive level involvement in this work. Your team may also include trusted volunteers and board members. Be sure that, (a) the team members are empowered to implement the plan on behalf of the organization, and (b) that your plan ties into other organizational decisions you have made/are making.

### Program decisions

*What are your goals? Who are you trying to influence? How will you measure success?*

#### a. Goal

What are you trying to do? This is the most important component of a good plan and needs to be as *specific* as possible. Your goal is not your mission. Your goal is what you want to change. What is it, exactly, that you want to accomplish? Do you want to:

- change behavior, or
- change policy?

Each of these goals is different and requires a different strategy.

#### b. Decision maker

Who makes your goal a reality? It is crucial to identify who will make your goal a reality. Who exactly are you trying to influence? If your goal is to change behavior, it may be a specific consumer group. If your goal is to change policy, the decision maker may be a key policy influencer (such as a legislator or city council member).

You may not yet have direct access to these key decision makers, but once you identify who they are, you can figure out the best way to influence them.

#### c. Measurements of success

How do you know what you are doing is working? A good way to determine if your goal is specific enough is to chart how you will measure your progress. This can be done through qualitative (anecdotal) and quantitative measures. It can be a mixture of outputs (short term deliverables) and outcomes (change over time).

Measurements are best defined and reviewed over the course of your communications program. Ongoing assessment allows you to revise your strategy and

maximize your success. It is a reality that your strategy will change over time.

### Context: internal and external scans

*The success of your efforts depends on an accurate assessment of the environment within which you operate and are seeking to make change happen.*

#### a. Internal scan

What are the assets and challenges of your organization that impact your plan? Assess your capacity by examining your internal assets and the challenges you face.

- Resources: Staff, resources and tools available to do your communications work.
- Perception: How is your organization perceived?
- Competition: Are there others doing the same work? Can you partner?

#### b. External scan

What is already happening outside your organization that may impact this plan? What work has already been done in this area? Is there opposition or a debate underway on this issue?

#### c. Define your position

Once you determine what the existing situation is, you can decide if you are going to:

*Position 1: Leap into an existing debate* — Fortify and amplify an established debate and spend your time and resources fortifying your position. This means “heavy implementation,” i.e., discussing the best tactics that can be employed in a widespread way.

*Position 2: Frame the debate* — Most organizations think they have a blank slate, with no misperceptions to correct. Activities involved in framing a debate include research, language development, messaging, audience research and opposition planning. For implementation, this usually means agenda-setting tactics, such as placement of a key news article or speech at a high-profile event with important stakeholders who will echo the message. While



most organizations think they are in this position, it is not usually the case. Once the debate has been framed, move to Position 1 – to fortify and amplify.

*Position 3: Re-frame the debate* — Most organizations find themselves in this position. Sometimes groups fortify and amplify a losing debate, when what they really need to do is cut their losses. How do you talk about an issue in a new way, to gain traction and make progress? Activities include research and messaging, meeting with allies to determine new ways to discuss the issue and then continued framing activities, such as agenda-setting articles, opinion pieces and speeches.

### Strategic choices

*Who is your target audience and what do they care about? What is the best way to approach them? What key messages will they respond to? Who will be the messenger? At this point you need to make some important decisions.*

#### Decision 1

a. *Audience target* – Who must you reach to achieve your goal? The more clearly you define your audience the more strategic you can be about reaching that audience. The “general public” is not a target audience and will result in a watered down message. You must choose a specific, definable audience: Male or female? From which geographic area? How old are they? For example, the Don’t Mess with Texas campaign decided to target male Texans under the age of 25 (see page 28).

b. *Values/core concerns* – What existing beliefs can you tap into to reach your audience? What will compel members of your audience to move toward your goal? Remember this is about *their* value system not *yours*. How they think and what lens they use to make decisions are important to understand if you want them to connect with your issue. You may need to conduct research to understand the “points of persuasion.” Once you have identified these points, review your goal, target audience, your internal and external scans and make a decision.

#### Decision 2

a. *Strategic approach* – What is your overall strategy? Strategic approach is frequently confused with tactics. Strategic approach is the big picture. Tactics are the lines you use to draw the picture.

#### Decision 3

a. *Message* – What key points do you want to make with your target audience? Consider their value system (not yours). Review the persuasion points. Remember, “it’s not what you want to tell them, it’s what they can hear.”

b. *Messengers* – Who has the best chance of resonating with your target audience? Who delivers your message is just as important as what you choose to say. The right message delivered by the wrong messenger will fall on deaf years.

### Communications objectives

*How are you going to get your message to your audience using your chosen approach? These are the big “to dos” of the communications plan. These answer how you are going to get your message to your audience using your chosen approach:*

- goal
- decision maker
- measurement of success
- strategic approach
- the message
- the messenger

### Tactics

*Consider your goal, internal and external scans, target audience and message. Then run every tactic through these questions:*

- Who will the tactic reach? (your target audience)
- How does this support the goal?
- What is the anticipated output? (usually an activity that your organization controls)
- What is the anticipated outcome? (usually a consequence of an activity or action your organization implemented) **cMr**

Hot off the Presses

SPIN Project Tutorial:  
**Online Communications**

[www.spinproject.org/  
downloads/onlinecomms.pdf](http://www.spinproject.org/downloads/onlinecomms.pdf)

# Evaluating Your Communications Effectiveness

## Communications Tactics: A Sample Worksheet

Community media centers make a practice out of empowering others to communicate effectively, but when the tables are turned, are media centers practicing what they preach?

Your effectiveness as an organization depends on your ability to communicate with your various constituencies – the public, existing and potential producers, members, supporters and advocates.

A communications audit is a great first step in developing a strategic communications plan that will lead you to more effective communication. It will help you understand who your various audiences are and the tools you have (or need to acquire!) for reaching them and mobilizing action.

This worksheet is a helpful tool that a community media center can use in evaluating its range of communications methods, strategies and tactics.

As you engage in the planning process, you will consider the communications tactics that will best match your message and audience. Here are some of the tactics and tools to consider. As you think of others, add them to the list.

	Currently Using	Would Like to Use	Goal?	Audience?
<b>Presentations/Events</b>				
Personal presentations				
Group presentations				
Special events				
<b>Communications Tools</b>				
Signage				
Print newsletters				
Direct mail				
Op Ed pieces				
Thank you notes				
Website				
Email newsletters				
Email signatures				
Listserv(s)				
Blogs				
Public access TV				
Radio programming				
Podcasting				
Videoblogging				
Streaming				
Text messaging				
Instant messaging				
RSS syndication				
Aggregation sites				
Social networking sites				
<b>Circulation Material</b>				
Flyers/posters				
Press releases				
Calendar listings				
<b>Advertising</b>				
Print advertisements				
Radio ads				
PSAs				
Bus ads				
Other listservs/blogs				

# The Challenge to Evolve

by Kari Peterson

COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTERS face a number of challenges as we find ourselves in the middle of a significant explosion of new media and communication activity. These are not new challenges; we've faced them before and will face them again.

The environment today is not just about new technologies, new applications and new tools. It is about a whole new way of characterizing media and communication. Those who follow trends call this a new era of communication. An era defined as "participatory." There are new ways to communicate, engage, participate, make and share media.


Media by and for the people. Right up our alley.

**First challenge:** Learn about all these new tools. We have to understand all we can possibly understand about the culture of social media. Chances are good social media will impact the world of community media as we know it; web 2.0 will take us beyond our traditional television-focused activities and services, and into new realms.

**Second challenge:** Figure out how to use and integrate these new tools into our operations. This has a two-fold purpose. We need to become modern nonprofit organizations, savvy in the use of today's communication tools, and more effective in our work (see case study on page 37). These new tools can help us in our own fundraising and advocacy work, and in our educational and outreach work, for example. Secondly, we need to understand how they work so we can add them to our toolbox and teach them to others.

**Third challenge:** Teach them to others. By teaching others to use these tools, we can help them more effectively achieve their missions. We can teach people how to make media in new ways, then share that media with others. Helping organizations with their capacity building strengthens community.

**Fourth challenge:** Reintroduce ourselves to our communities. We may have to tell a new story about ourselves. If we've been considered the TV people, we'll need to reintroduce ourselves as the communications people. As our local nonprofits think about using technology to enhance their effectiveness, do they think of us as the go-to source? We need to be more effective in telling our own story, in positioning ourselves as trusted sources. This involves education, promotions and re-branding.

Effective storytelling is where strategic communications comes in. 

"Even though we're an established, 13-year old community network with a tech-savvy board, we were not fully prepared for this explosion of new web-based tools. Serving up technology to the local nonprofit sector has taken on a whole new dimension. We had to ask ourselves, 'are we providing the most valued services to our community?' We determined it was time to reinvent ourselves."

 **Kimball Sargeant,**  
Davis Community Network

## *Case Study: The Media Center, Palo Alto, California*

We feel that we're at the very beginning of transformation. We've given web 2.0 workshops to groups and have organized events on citizen journalism, how to use blogs and videoblogging. We've launched new classes aimed at internet media publishers. We added pages to our website for online videos, which are laid out thematically so eventually people can subscribe to our videos by subject. For a few years now, we've been putting government meetings and candidate debates online in separately clickable indexed clips. Now we are confronting two difficult challenges:

1. We have to create a new image for our media center in terms of these new services and events, when we weren't all that good at making ourselves well known for our more traditional services.

2. While web 2.0 involves blogging, social networking, wikis, social bookmarking, email-marketing, mapping, etc., we still only have expertise in video production. While it is not a big stretch

to add audio production for podcasting support (we have added a podcasting class), it is a stretch to quickly become experts on all the other tools (let alone web design). It's even a challenge to incorporate expertise in teaching short format video scripting.

Our background is steeped in teaching people which buttons to push to make half hour TV talk shows, and which forms to fill out.

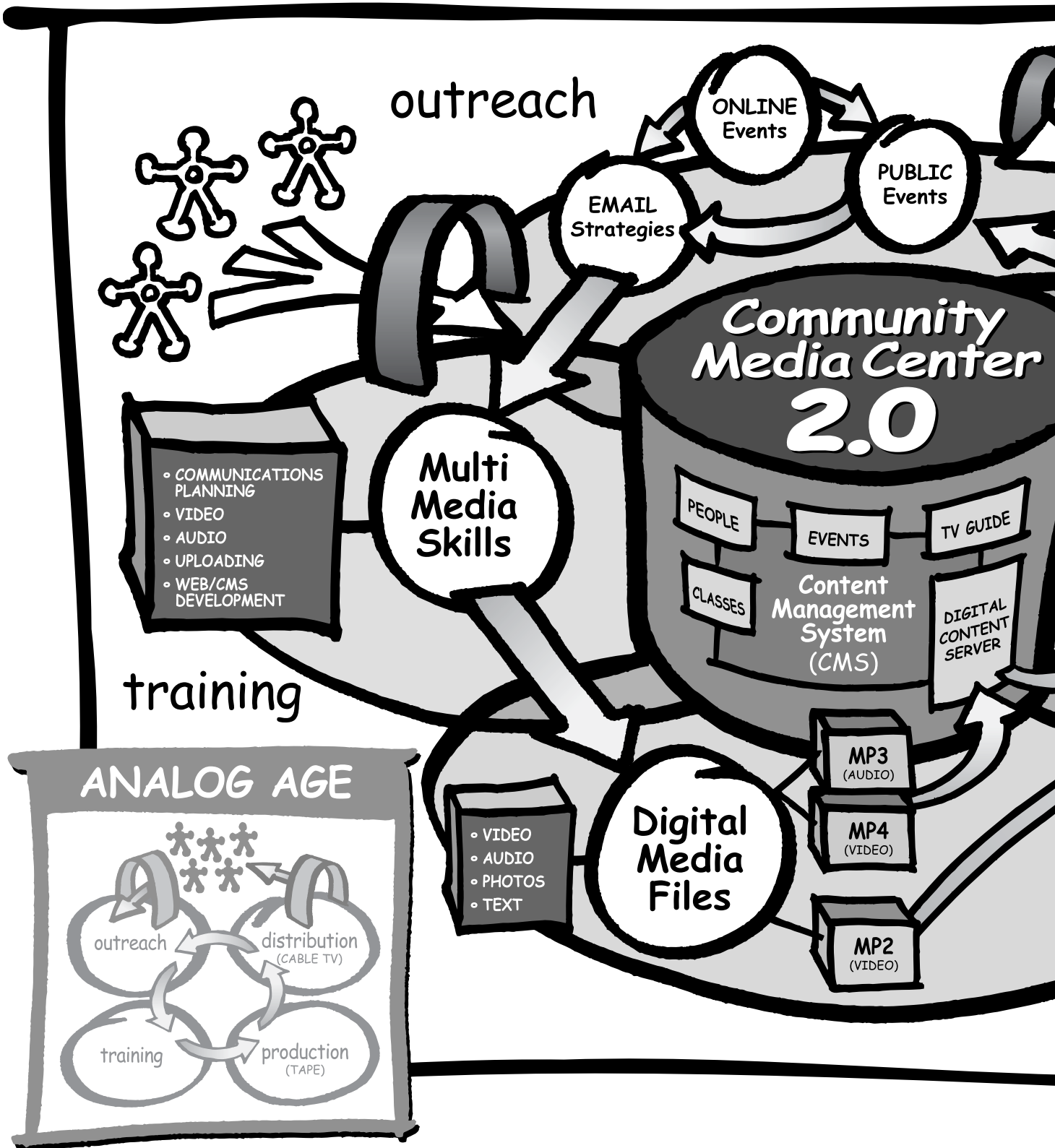
Some first steps are easy to list, including: hosting events, new classes, making changes to the Media Center's website. But, getting to the level of a thriving community media center with all the traditional and new dimensions we want to incorporate is a tall order. At this point, we trust there is still a need for a "brick and mortar" place to get tech support, corporeal instructors, peer support, and a bridge across the digital divide in this age of internet media and web 2.0 tools.

 **Annie Folger and Elliot Margolies**  
[www.communitymediacenter.net](http://www.communitymediacenter.net)



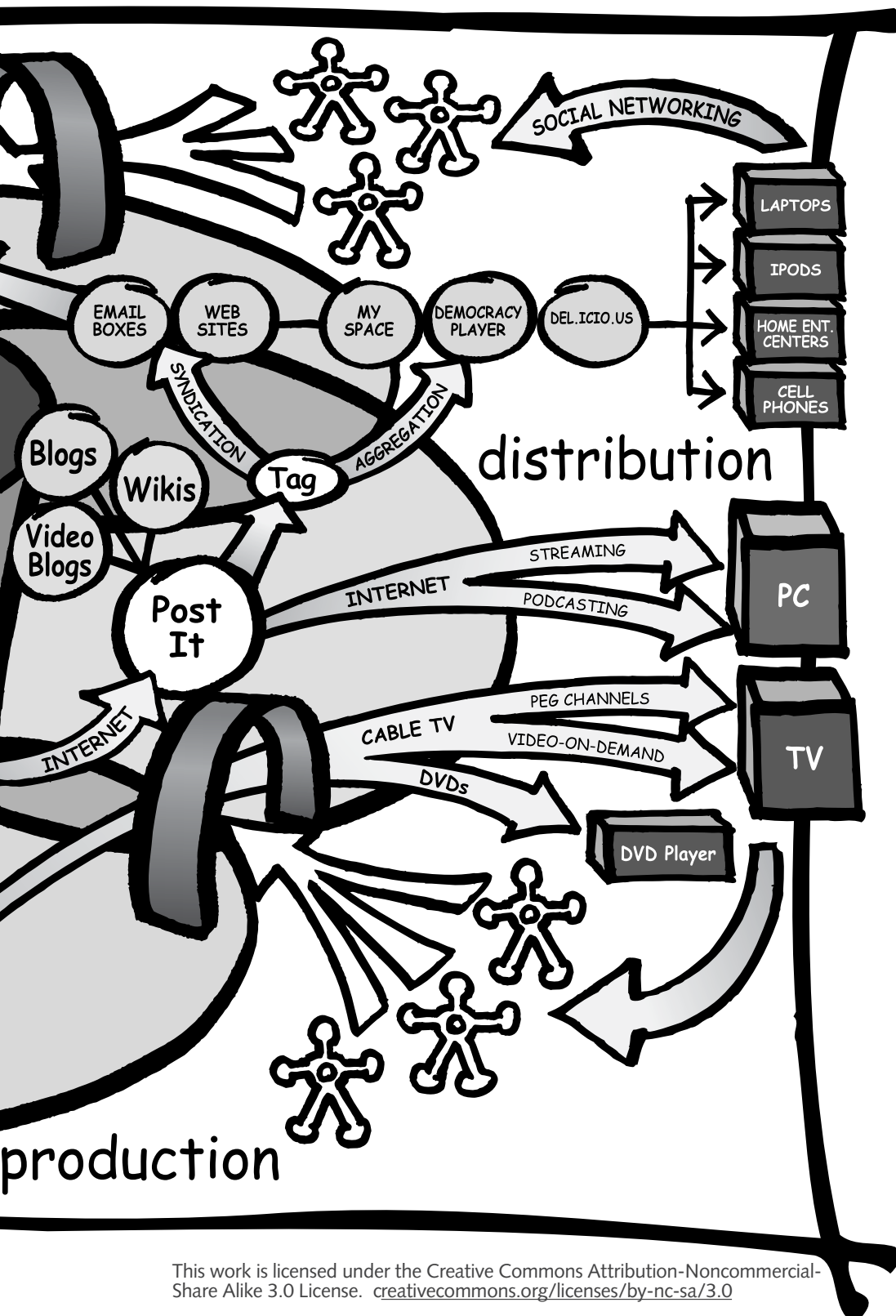
**Analog Access:** In the traditional public access model, a community media center conducts outreach (to general audiences, to the press) using a combination of public events, mass mailings/email list notices, and targeted press releases to mainstream media organizations. This is a broadcast model, designed to promote the production of video programs and viewership of the cable access channel(s) using “one-to-many” communications models.

**Digital Access:** In the era of digital media files and internet distribution, the traditional public access model is “amplified.” **Outreach** includes public (“offline”) events and electronic communications (e-newsletters, surveys, action alerts, fundraising appeals, etc.) that are integrated with contact databases on the organization’s “web hub.” The hub is the media center’s “**content management system**” and its “home page” serves as one of several “**portals**” to the range of services offered by the organization:



**Training** (in multi-media tools – digital video production and editing, video uploading, blogging, audio production, podcasting, etc.), **Production** (of digital media files that can include video, audio, text, photos) and **Distribution** of video programs on multiple platforms, including both cable and the internet. **Cable** content is now distributed through PEG channels and “video-on-demand” services (made possible through “on-demand menus” and digital recording devices). **Internet** distri-

bution opens new avenues to the public. Video (and other media) content can be “**posted**” to the organization’s web hub or remote internet sites (e.g., *blip.tv* or the very popular *YouTube*). Viewers can access channel line-ups on the website and opt to view both streaming and downloadable versions of the program. Video clips (and other content) are posted to the web hub, blogs or wikis, and they are tagged with key words that make searches possible.



**Tags** make searching possible within the organization’s site AND power mission critical internet features: **Syndication** and **Aggregation**. Syndication allows you to republish new posts automatically to email boxes and websites. Aggregation collects tagged content in larger hubs, for example: *Tech-norati* collects blog postings; *Flickr* collects photos; *Democracy Player* collects social action video; *Del.icio.us* collects bookmarks. *MySpace* integrates multiple internet features for the purpose of “making friends.”

At their core, Aggregation and Syndication get content directly to the people who are interested in it. Our online users, viewers, and friends become part of our growing network of supporters and are continually invited to participate in the work of the community media center – as producers, viewers, members and donors. Our outreach strategy grows more sophisticated as we (1) develop a consistent email strategy to direct the community to our web hub, (2) measure the numbers and types of visits to our hub, and (3) improve service delivery to our network of supporters who can be rapidly mobilized.

# Telling the Community Media Story

*“It is ironic that for decades, we have helped people and organizations tell their stories, but our own story often goes unheard.”*

NO MATTER WHAT TECHNOLOGY we use, community media centers (CMCs) are woven from the dense threads of human relationships. Our primary tool is not the camera or *YouTube* – it is the stories that each of us tells to make sense of and belong to our local communities.

Storytelling is the traditional role of CMCs. Our networks of producers, volunteers and supporters rely on us to help them frame their stories, tell them for full effect, and figure out how to get the word “out there” to the people who need to hear, understand and take action.

It is ironic that for decades, we have helped people and organizations tell their stories, but our own story often goes unheard. We exist to facilitate community story telling, yet we’ve not always been effective in making our own story known. We’re specialists in community communications, yet have we been successful in our own communication?

CMCs have stories to tell.

- We have stories about media democracy, media reform and free speech. Have we used our own media tools to educate, inspire and mobilize? Are our communities prepared to support and defend public access media if and when it is threatened? Can we call upon our communities to stand up to forces outside our town’s borders that would compromise the free and open media values we all hold dear?
- We have stories to tell about media – about using media to effect change, and about using media to empower and engage, teach and bring people together. Have we been compelling in telling that story? Have we been effective in drawing people in to use media in these ways?
- We have new stories to tell, as media and communication redefine our culture, or as culture redefines our media. Are we excited and prepared to tell that story?

Are we ready to put powerful new tools to work to help us become better story tellers? **CMR**

## *Tech-Savvy Communications: A Toolkit for Nonprofits*

One of the consistent observations from NPower Seattle’s work helping nonprofits use technology to better serve their communities is that many nonprofit organizations are doing amazing work, yet they struggle to tell their story in an effective way. The Tech-Savvy Communications toolkit is our response to the need we saw for a resource to fill in the missing pieces by (1) providing an overview of effective communications for nonprofits, and (2) emphasizing technology as a tool in effective communications.

The process described here for developing tech-savvy communications begins with laying some important groundwork, progresses from there to three steps of (1) identifying your audience, (2) creating effective key messages, and (3) evaluating communication tactics, and finishes with taking action by crafting your com-

munications objectives and checking yourself against best practices. Along the way, we place special emphasis on taking the time to identify your audience(s). That’s because clarity about the audience and its perceptions, objections, and experience is the foundation for both developing clear messages that speak to your audience’s interests, and for identifying appropriate tactics to deliver the message.

The Tech-Savvy Communications toolkit is a practical, interactive guide that offers you opportunities to apply the information and suggestions you find here, and points you to resources to learn more.

[npowerseattle.org/education/resources/communications.htm](http://npowerseattle.org/education/resources/communications.htm)



# 10 Tips for Storytelling

by Klaus Fog

**B**EFORE YOU BEGIN, try to forget your current position at the organization for a moment. Instead, pretend that you're a newspaper journalist or a TV reporter. Ready?

1. Decide what is the most important message you want to get across using your story? There should be one key message. What do you hope to achieve by telling the story?

2. What is the conflict (the challenge to be solved) in the story? If there is no conflict or challenge, there is no story.

3. What causes the conflict, how does it unfold and how is it solved? Every story has a beginning, middle and an end.

4. Can you identify the characters of the story? Who is the hero, what is his goal, and who is the adversary standing in his way?

5. Don't let facts, figures or charts dominate your story. They speak only to reason and logic. The compelling story speaks to our emotions!

6. Be as specific as possible. Include the little visual details that describe the setting or the atmosphere, and give us a sense of what the characters feel and think during the course of events.

7. Try to give your story a catchy headline that "paints" an image before the eyes of the audience. You could even try to use several images to tell your story emphasizing the important points along the way.

8. Kill the empty management lingo. Instead, for practice, try to imagine that you're telling a fairy tale to a six-year-old kid (maybe your son or daughter or a child in your family). If you succeed, you are on the right track.

9. An open ending can be powerful if you want to stimulate discussion or make your audience reflect on the story.

10. A negative story or a story with a negative ending can be used constructively if it adds a new perspective on the subject or illustrates "a lesson learned." **CMR**

**Klaus Fog** is the founder of SIGMA an organization specializes in strategic communication, branding and storytelling. He is the author of *STORYTELLING – TAKING BRANDING INTO PRACTICE* (2002).

For more information, see [best-marketing.com](http://best-marketing.com)

*“[Effective storytelling] is an essential message for CMCs, who must tell their own story, and who endeavor to help individuals and organizations in their communities tell theirs.”*

## *How to Tell a Good Story*

**Andy Goodman**

[www.agoodmanonline.com](http://www.agoodmanonline.com)

A good story can help advance your cause in many ways. It can rouse an audience to action. It can compel donors to give. It can attract the right people to your board and staff. And it can encourage the people who are already on your team to fight even harder. But do you know how to tell a good story? And do you know the kinds of stories that can move you forward the fastest?

Andy Goodman's website will help move you to action – starting with the stories you tell. Exciting resources here to get you started. Be sure to watch his video in the workshops section.

**free-range thinking**

[www.agoodmanonline.com/newsletter](http://www.agoodmanonline.com/newsletter)

Andy Goodman's monthly newsletter is a journal of communications best practices and resources for public interest groups, foundations, and progressive businesses that want to reach more people more effectively.

**Nancy Schwartz**

[www.nancyschwartz.com](http://www.nancyschwartz.com)

You will find a wealth of very useful articles on non-profit marketing and branding. Nancy Schwartz' site is a rich portal to concrete steps and practical examples that will raise your profile and expand your relationships in the community, including, "2006 Best Resources for Nonprofit and Foundation Communicators."

# Excellence in Storytelling

## The 59 Smartest Organizations Online

These nonprofits were chosen for their excellence in online storytelling. They are winners because of their web 2.0 smarts and a willingness to engage their constituents. They give their volunteers and members a voice and get out of the way. They're pros at mobilizing awareness online. They're experimenters. Innovators. On a mission. They're fearless. Here are some of the winners for 2006. Check them out!

- Greenpeace, 144 points: [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)
- St. Jude Children's Research, 30 points: [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org)
- The ONE Campaign, 20 points: [www.one.org](http://www.one.org)
- Oxfam America, 15 points: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)
- MoveOn, 13 points: [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)
- The Gates Foundation, 5 points: [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org)
- CivicSpace, 3 points: [www.civicspacelabs.org](http://www.civicspacelabs.org)

To see the full list, visit [www.squidoo.com/org20](http://www.squidoo.com/org20)

SAYS BRIAN SATTERFIELD, writing for TechSoup, "As a nonprofit, one of the ways you raise funds and attract attention to your cause is through the art of storytelling. Whether you recount the history of your organization to a donor, the life of someone you've helped in a grant proposal, or the challenges you face in a letter to supporters, storytelling is an everyday aspect of nonprofit life.

A well-told story can bring an invaluable sense of immediacy to your cause, especially important when you have just minutes (or even seconds) to capture the attention of your audience. Yet whereas nonprofits' storytelling arsenal was once largely limited to the traditional mechanisms of writing or speak-

ing, new, affordable multi-media tools are making it possible to tell your story digitally, combining the power of images, narration, music, and text to engage and inspire others to action."

This is an essential message for community media centers, who must tell their own story, and who endeavor to help individuals and organizations in their communities tell theirs.

Brian's article, and other valuable how-to's, worksheets,

case studies, profiles, and product comparisons, written for all budgets and all levels of technical expertise, can be found at [www.techsoup.org/learningcenter](http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter), an essential resource for media centers and nonprofits in the web 2.0 era **CMR**

*"The new internet changes the rules. Something big is happening online, it's free, it's fast and more and more nonprofits are figuring out how to use it."*

### Case Study: Don't Mess with Texas

For an anti-litter campaign in Texas, campaigners targeted young men who didn't really care about the environment or littering – but did carry enormous pride when it came to the Lone Star state. Keeping this value in mind, campaigners built messages that focused on state pride rather than littering. Don't

Mess with Texas became a rallying cry about Texas rather than litter, and continues to be a successful campaign. As one endorsement states: "I love your programs and it makes me proud to be a Texan to see your ads that promote TEXAS and keeping it clean."

[www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

### Case Study: Save the Internet

Launched by a coalition of key influencers concerned with internet development, communications policy and open networks, SavetheInternet.com identified the "push button issues" of fairness, access and free speech and framed "net neutrality" as the core principle with which to fight new communications laws in Congress.

In an effort to keep public networks open and the internet available to all, more than 1.6 million online signatures have been collected and dozens

of events have been coordinated at local Congressional offices. They have successfully promoted word of mouth support for net neutrality, by employing viral video and flash animation to highlight public events and showcase inflammatory statements. Net neutrality is now part of the public policy debate and the phone and cable companies have not been able to pass national legislation that would prevent competitors from accessing public networks.

[www.savetheinternet.com](http://www.savetheinternet.com)

# Section III. Same Mission, New Tools

## Building Communities Online

**R**EADY OR NOT, we're in a new communications era. In simple terms, the web 2.0 era is characterized by new tools and new applications, built on new platforms. More radical and transforming, however, is the way in which people are using these new tools, applications and platforms. People's engagement with communications is nothing short of explosive.

For the nonprofit sector, this explosion is leading to huge potential to increase organizational capacity and effective new ways for achieving missions. For us as community media centers (CMCs), it's opening up profound new ways for us to build community.

Central to readiness in adapting to the web 2.0 world is a website capable of supporting new tools and practices. All nonprofit organizations in this new era will need to transition their operations from flat web superhighway billboards to interactive access media hubs. This is especially true for CMCs.

As nonprofits improve their storytelling, they will seek an audience around the electronic campfire. They will turn first to their local CMC. CMCs are connected to a wide network of interest groups and organizations. As powerful as a printing press, community access channels "broadcast" to wide local audiences. Because of our traditional position as trusted com-

*"Because of our traditional position as trusted community media resources, we will be expected to build the digital media delivery systems to support this new generation of storytellers."*

*"The internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media."*

~ The Cluetrain Manifesto  
[www.cluetrain.com](http://www.cluetrain.com)

community media resources, we will be expected to build the digital media delivery systems to support this new generation of storytellers.

The future community media center is built on a "platform": a multi-media web hub that:

- builds audiences for local cable access channels
- makes posting all kinds of content easy – video, audio, photos, blogs
- integrates with an email strategy that drives people to the web hub
- automatically syndicates posts for the people who are interested (and distributes to their email or website)
- uses tags to label posts so they can be found
- engages broader community involvement and "net action": watch a program, get more information, tell a friend, write a letter, make a TV show, volunteer time, give money, build the future
- can measure and analyze viewer patterns and hub traffic

The success of this strategy depends, as we discussed in Section II, on a clear and specific strategic communications plan. Its execution depends on a solid understanding of the tools presented in this section. **CMR**

### Pushing Power to the Edges

Traditional ways of engaging civically are coming to an end. For example:

- Large numbers of people can be mobilized within hours – even minutes – to donate, volunteer, protest, call Congress, boycott – all at little or no cost.
- Individuals are bypassing the work of established parties and organizations with their self-generated campaigns.
- Individuals, groups and organizations are generating their own news without the benefit of mainstream media.

Organizations must:

- nimbly jump on to the fast-moving wave of opportunities that the internet both delivers and makes possible
- integrate online activities with offline
- leverage extended networks of activists, friends and sympathizers across issues areas
- lead using a new set of facilitative skills

~ from **PUSHING POWER TO THE EDGES**, an overview of the state of online democracy,  
[evolvefoundation.org/?q=pacepartner](http://evolvefoundation.org/?q=pacepartner)



# Use Your Social Networks to Build Online Communities

## Sources

Information for this article comes from "Marketing to Social Networking Sites, Targeted," by Enid Burns

[www.clickz.com/show-Page.html?page=3625536](http://www.clickz.com/show-Page.html?page=3625536)

The editors would also like to acknowledge Nina Bianchini of Ning.com, and her article,

[blog.ning.com/2007/03/eight\\_steps\\_to\\_creating\\_a\\_grea.html](http://blog.ning.com/2007/03/eight_steps_to_creating_a_grea.html)

## Web 2.0: Buzzword or Really Big Deal?

SEOMoz, a Seattle-based company that hosts the Web 2.0 Awards, describes web 2.0 as the rebirth of sites that focus on *user empowerment*. Check out SEOMoz for over 300 notable web 2.0 sites in 38 categories – award winners in tagging, social networking, blogging, podcasts, wikis and more. [www.seomoz.org/web2.0](http://www.seomoz.org/web2.0)

**N**EARLY ONE IN FOUR adult internet users in the U.S. – 41 million people – regularly visits popular social networking sites, (for example, *MySpace*, *Facebook*, or a build-your-own, like those at *Ning.com*) according to a recent study.

Online social networking is about connecting and sharing information with other like-minded people via the web. Community media centers build community; is there a role for CMCs to play in this growing online social networking culture? CMCs can teach about or encourage the creation of social networks. They can host social networks or provide guidance to those looking for ways to connect with others. They can support nonprofits in their use of social networks. Nonprofits can use online communities to accomplish, for example, these goals:

- increase visibility about an issue of concern
- mobilize concerned citizens to advocate for a political agenda
- facilitate shared learning between constituents, staff and other like-minded individuals and organizations
- support fundraising efforts by connecting donors and/or members
- announce current events to the public
- recruit volunteers for the organization
- share lessons and discuss challenges with colleagues and peers

To make the most of an online community – whether you join a social networking site or build your own – think of it as an ongoing “block party.” If you do put one together yourself, you’ll want to ensure these essential components of a successful social gathering:

- **Purpose:** Have a clear theme or purpose for the gathering.
- **Host:** Recruit a dynamic host.
- **Audience:** Invite a good group to get things started.
- **Ambience:** Take the time to set up the topics of conversation; set the mood.
- **Promotion:** Invite people in; use your networks.
- **Management:** Party down; make sure conversation keeps going with fresh material and people.
- **Moderation:** Expect party crashers; keep the peace.
- **Staffing:** Make sure you have adequate assistance to keep it going.

Remember: You are building an **online community**. As the owner, leader, and/or community evangelist, it’s your job to attract users, and the standard promotional approaches (search engines, word of mouth, submitting links to other sites) apply. This is the easy part. Making sure the right people stick around is harder. Your job is to provide the best environment for people to come together; the community takes it from there. **CMR**

## *NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network*

NTEN is the international membership organization for nonprofit technologists. NTEN believes that technology allows nonprofits to work with greater effectiveness and social impact. NTEN enables its members to strategically use technology so that they, in turn, make the world a better, just, and equitable place.

From NTEN’s highly regarded annual conference to its jam-packed blog, monthly webinars, more than a hundred discussion lists, and its extensive network of highly skilled nonprofit technology partners, NTEN is a major hub

of knowledge and information on new media tools. Connect with members, join a local NTEN club or online group, and explore NTEN’s rich website ([www.nten.org](http://www.nten.org)) to learn more about any of the tools discussed in this issue of “Community Media 2.0.”

The editors extend their very special thanks to Katrin Verclas and Holly Ross, who run NTEN and continue to provide their ingenuity, connections, and unflagging energy to invent the emerging field of nonprofit technology and communications.

# Power from the People: Assessing the New Online Participatory Tools

by Colin Delany

A FEW YEARS AGO, nonprofits and advocacy groups only had a handful of online tools to spread the word about themselves and their issues; if you had a website and an email list, you were pretty well covering the bases. Since the end of the dot-com boom, though, a whole new batch of applications has been simmering, and many have come to full boil in the last couple of years. From social media, to blogs, to viral marketing, these tools offer organizations entirely new avenues to find and interact with supporters and get their message out to the world.

The members of this recent crop of applications generally share a common characteristic: they depend on the active participation of many different people for their success. Loosely gathered together as “web 2.0” technologies (a phrase that has almost as many definitions as it has definers), these “social” or “participatory” applications become more powerful as more people contribute.

Think about *YouTube* – one of a number of popular free video sharing websites. While a site with one person’s video clips can be interesting, it’s not likely to be revolutionary in the same way as a site that holds millions of people’s clips and allows others to display them on their own sites. Blogs follow a similar logic, since bloggers are constantly referring to each other in an ongoing conversation as well as building content from readers’ comments and contributions. Social networking sites such as *MySpace* and *Facebook*? The same idea – as more people participate, the value of the whole system tends to increase.

Many companies and organizations are now establishing blogs, creating *MySpace* sites and *YouTube* channels. They are experimenting with social media as they look for new ways to interact with constituents and promote themselves. But of course, every opportunity has costs as well as benefits, and each of the new technologies will absorb resources – they’ll demand your time at the very least. Considering your

mission and communications goals, what tools and strategies are likely to be worth the effort? Let’s look at the options one by one.

## Blogs

At one level, blogs are just websites that are easy to update. Despite the popular definition that blogs are online diaries, people use blogging software for all kinds of applications that don’t involve sharing secrets with strangers, simply because blogs are such convenient publishing tools. But the common conception of a blog is a site that’s frequently updated and that is the personal product of one or more authors. It can be a diary, an op-ed column, a community center, an outlet for art or investi-

**Colin Delany** is founder and editor of [epolitics.com](http://epolitics.com), a site that focuses on the tools and tactics of internet-based political advocacy. He is currently the online communications manager for the National Environmental Trust.

Colin can be reached at [cpd@epolitics.com](mailto:cpd@epolitics.com)

This article is excerpted from [idealware.org/articles/participatory\\_tools.php](http://idealware.org/articles/participatory_tools.php).

Beth Kanter and Laura Quinn also contributed.

## Beth Kanter on Blogging

### Five steps to a successful blog

Blogs are a direct way to talk about your organization, make you more findable and build relationships. Here’s what you need to be successful:

1. A clear message, voice or point of view – why are you writing about your topic?
2. An obvious need – will you be contributing something unique to the space?
3. A clear goal – what are you going to write about? Is your focus narrow or broad? Personal or professional?
4. A strong commitment – you don’t have to write dozens of articles a day, but you need to be consistent.
5. An audience – by answering all of the above, you will build an audience.

### Three good blogging software choices

1. *Blogger*  
[www.Blogger.com](http://www.Blogger.com)
2. *Wordpress* (hosted)  
[www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)
3. *LiveJournal*  
[www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)

### Build your networks/spread the word!

*Technorati* – Be sure to link your blog to *Technorati* – an “aggregation” site currently tracking 75 million blogs that you can search. According to *Technorati* data, there are over 175,000 new blogs (that’s just blogs) every day. Bloggers update their blogs regularly to the tune of over 1.6 million posts a day, or over 18 updates a second.  
[www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com)

~ Beth Kanter is a professional blogger and writes about the use of social media tools in the nonprofit sector for social change. Learn more at [www.bethkanter.org](http://www.bethkanter.org)

## Really Simple Syndication

RSS is a great way to send new information out to your community on a regular basis – schedules, production opportunities, or any information – as this information is updated on your website.



Visit [techsoup.org/learningcenter](http://techsoup.org/learningcenter) for more information on RSS and other major nonprofit technology resources.

The nitty gritty of RSS for nonprofits is also available at [www.consultant-com-mons.org/node/105](http://www.consultant-com-mons.org/node/105)

BBC's guide to RSS: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/3223484.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/3223484.stm)

Introduction to RSS set up: [webreference.com](http://webreference.com)

gative journalism, or a venue for shameless self-promotion. Blogs become true participatory tools when they interact with other blogs in “cross-blog conversation” and allow reader comments as part of an ongoing conversation.

### *Should your organization have a blog?*

A blog can be an inexpensive and effective tool for just about any kind of group that prioritizes external communications. They're particularly useful for organizations who would like to:

- publicly advocate a particular point of view (point of view is what a blog is about)
- showcase a well-known figure (like an executive director or celebrity) who is willing to blog their thoughts
- demonstrate the day-to-day workings of their organization by asking staff members or volunteers to blog about their experiences
- highlight the thoughts or work of the clients they serve
- quickly and effectively respond to bloggers in their own sphere
- highlight and discuss a specific short-term project

Blogs can also help draw search engine traffic, both from traditional search engines such as *Google* and blog-specific search tools like *Technorati*.

Make sure, however, that you have the time and the things to say to become a real

part of the conversation. A blog that's an obvious hack or an afterthought isn't going to do much good and may do a lot of harm, particularly if it makes you look phony or it's so bad that people make fun of it (the blogosphere can be a tough playground). Keeping a blog updated takes a lot of work (plan for a minimum of four hours a week) – make sure that you have the internal capacity to keep it running before you start. An out-of-date blog, particularly one that just has a months-old launch announcement and no follow-up articles, just makes you look bad.

Even if your organization doesn't start its own blog, you can still work with bloggers to get your ideas out into the world. Start by monitoring blogs to see who's writing about your issues (*Technorati* is a good place to start), and consider getting in touch with the authors directly when you have something that you think they might write about. Think of bloggers as journalists with particularly cheap printing presses. Don't bombard them with dry press releases, though – they'll generally ignore those. A personal pitch is usually much more effective. Be authentic!

### **RSS feeds**

From the glamour of blogs, let's turn to the simplest of web 2.0 tools, RSS. Really Simple Syndication (or Rich Site Syndication) allows easy notification when a site is updated. At their simplest and most common, RSS feeds send subscribers the title and a blurb about each new post on a given site or blog, along with a link to the full piece. Originally, subscribers used specialized feed reading software to keep up with RSS feeds, but many sites now aggregate and display feeds from a variety of sources. Web start pages such as those on *Google* and at *MyYahoo*, for instance, allow people to choose and display the feeds they want to follow.

Over the last couple of years, most major media outlets have implemented RSS to allow their readers to keep up with site changes as they happen. RSS feeds are built into most blogging software and are so common in the blogosphere that they are becoming critical to a site's credibility among bloggers as an information source.

## *RSS, Tags and Social Bookmarking: Building Blocks for CMCs*

Nonprofits are all about connecting with people. Nonprofit groups live or die based on their ability to communicate complex issues to large audiences, engage supporters in their cause, and foster collaboration within and across organizations.

The latest generation of web tools offers ever-expanding ways for nonprofits to extend and deepen their collaborative capacity. To understand these tools and learn how to use them effectively, you need to understand the three basic building blocks of the most exciting nonprofit technology projects: RSS, tags, and social bookmarking.

~ Alexandra Samuel, Social Signal  
[www.alexandrasamuel.com](http://www.alexandrasamuel.com)

excerpted from  
[nten.typepad.com/newsletter/2006/12/the\\_building\\_blocks.html](http://nten.typepad.com/newsletter/2006/12/the_building_blocks.html)



## Should your organization use RSS feeds?

Using a start page or RSS reader makes it much easier to keep up with news and articles in your field and mentions of your organization. As such, every organization should take a look. To get started, the BBC has a nice guide to reading feeds (*see sidebar, page 32*).

What about creating RSS feeds for your own content? If your website isn't frequently updated and you're communicating with a mainstream audience, an RSS feed isn't critical. However, it can be useful in attracting the attention of a more technical audience and allowing people to follow frequently updated content. A feed is a must if you want bloggers in particular to follow your cause or opinions. Setting up a feed isn't difficult, and is likely worth adding to your website in your next site update. As more and more people read RSS feeds without even realizing it (on their start pages or through an aggregating site), organizations that don't have their own RSS feed will be missing a potential audience.

**“Considering your mission and communications goals, what tools and strategies are likely to be worth the effort?”**

## Social networking

Just in the last year or so, nonprofits have begun using social networking sites such as *MySpace* and *Facebook* to spread their messages and to actively fish for supporters. To join social networking sites, organizations create “profile pages.” An organization profile usually has basic information about the group along with links to more detailed content, usually on the group's own website. You can generally also host videos and pictures as well as start a blog through your organization's profile.

Social networking sites connect you with supporters by allowing them to become your “friends,” which means that a link to their profile shows up on your profile and vice versa. Thus, your name and your organization's image (your logo, or something more compelling) will appear on pages throughout the site if you build up enough friends.

To get friends, you can contact people directly who are already friends with other profiles in your interest area (for instance, other environmental groups if you're an environmental group), and you'll also pick

## Web 3.0? The Widget

User-generated content was a hallmark of 2006. It's a fair bet 2007 will be all about further customizing your online life.

If you sit in front of a computer at work, chances are there are certain websites that you monitor throughout the day, every day – to check email, weather, or telecom headline news. But, thanks to widgets, taking multiple steps to track down headlines in one place and then check your email in another may seem woefully outdated this time next year. These mini-applications – also called “gadgets” – are simple bits of code, easily dragged onto a desktop or pasted into a personal page, where they are constantly updated with whatever information you want. “It's the exact opposite of what the web used to be,” explains Om Malik, a tech journalist and founding editor of *gigaom.com*.

[www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16329739/site/newsweek/page/1](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16329739/site/newsweek/page/1)

## Case Study: Manhattan Neighborhood Network – “Videoblogging”

From the fast-moving, fast-paced, crowded streets of Manhattan, to the steep rolling hills of laid back, easy-going San Francisco, public access stations across the nation are incorporating videoblogging into their curriculum. The proliferation of inexpensive media-making tools is motivating more people to become media makers. Yet, meaningful media creation still requires skilled training and distribution channels. Manhattan Neighborhood Network is fostering the development of this new generation of producers by providing training and support in the various alternative methods of distribution while remaining true to its mission.

At MNN's videoblogging workshops, we teach how to create video content specifically for the web. From compressing and uploading videos, to creating RSS feeds, MNN is helping to empower people on the wrong side of the digital divide to create content for the web.

Further helping to bridge the gap between public access centers and internet video is *VlogTV*, airing on MNN twice a month. *VlogTV* is a place for videobloggers to showcase their vlogs, and where people can come together and learn about new web 2.0 applications and their impact on community media.

~ Ivettza Sanchez  
[www.mnn.org](http://www.mnn.org)

“Loosely gathered together as ‘web 2.0’ technologies, these ‘social’ or ‘participatory’ applications become more powerful as more people contribute.”

up friend requests from people who stumble across you on your friends’ profiles. You may want to promote your issues to your friend list regularly through bulletins (mass messages) and asking friends to post your alerts on their profiles. If your organization has an email activist list or email newsletter, you can build up a nucleus of supporters quickly if you ask your list to become your friends, since many of them will already be on the more popular networking sites.

*Should your organization use social networking sites?*

These sites are very inexpensive, but will require time and thought. Just as with a blog, your profile will need to be updated regularly, and you’ll need to take the time to respond to “friend” requests. Your social networking strategy will also need to be integrated into your overall communications strategy – your *MySpace* profile should be no less on-message than your normal website, although the look and feel may be different.

If you have the time, and are trying to reach the types of people most likely to be

using social networking (such as young people, or particularly “plugged in” types), these tools are worth a look. While this is a new and experimental communications method, a number of nonprofits have been very successful in using these sites to reach out to new supporters and also to communicate with a large audience.

### **Social media**

Social media and social networking are sometimes confused, but social media is a much broader concept – it refers generally to content that is created by site users rather than by a central person or group. *Flickr* and *Wikipedia* are great examples, as are blogs that allow comments. How can organizations use social media concepts?

Several groups have had great success asking supporters to edit and submit video clips that are then displayed on the group’s website. An organization could also solicit slogans from supporters, ask them to contribute their own personal stories or essays to an online presentation, provide them with photos to embellish with captions and speech bubbles, or ask them to vote or comment on ads, speeches and position papers.

*Should your organization ask for social media contributions?*

Allowing your members or readers to generate content has some real strengths as a tactic. For one thing, it allows you to capture the brainpower of far more people than you could reasonably hire – you can leverage the collective intelligence of a chunk of the internet. For another, it’s a terrific tool for community building. When your supporters submit content to your site, they can feel like they’re really contributing – they’re part of the team. Participating ties them to you and your issues at an emotional level. Organizations that have a strong supporter base or a topic that will interest a wide audience, and a smart promotion strategy, could get a lot of value out of community-generated content.

Do bear in mind that you’ll probably want to filter the content that arrives, just in case someone posts something obscene or that would embarrass your organization. Promptly contact people whose work

### *Beth Kanter on Tagging*

**What?** Tagging is the ability to assign keywords to a wide range of content, like favorite websites, bookmarks, digital photos, and blog posts.

**Why?** Tags are used in most social networking and online collaboration web tools as a way to help people find content, enable collaboration, and connect with others who have similar interests. If you combine tagging with RSS feeds, you can use it in a number of ways to benefit your work or organization – from counting backyard birds, to updating on projects, to fundraising presentations, to a general image bank for your organization.

**Example:** *Flickr* ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) is a web-based digital photo sharing application that uses tags to facilitate finding people and photos. It isn’t simply about putting your photos up on the web for the world to see. What if you could invite other people from around the world to have discussions about those images? What if you and your colleagues could annotate these photos with your own descriptions and observations? What if you could become part of an online community that contributes images of similar topics for you to consume? And, what if you could subscribe to an RSS feed so anytime a new picture was added about a topic you care about, were studying, or writing about – it would come automatically to you?

~ Beth Kanter  
[www.bethkanter.org](http://www.bethkanter.org)

you reject, though, to make sure any hard feelings get smoothed over. And don't be afraid to let criticism slip onto your site – it can be quite effective to allow a critic's words to stand, as long as you refute the message politely.

### Other options

These are the major social software tools that organizations are looking at, but you might also consider wikis (behind the scenes as project management tools or in public as educational tools), social news sites such as *Digg* (to promote your issues and stories) and social bookmarking sites such as *Del.icio.us* (to promote your own research). New applications are popping up all the time! Sites like [Micropersuasion.com](http://Micropersuasion.com) and [techcrunch.com](http://techcrunch.com) can help you keep track of them.

### Wrapping it up

What have we learned? The online communications options open to nonprofits and advocacy organizations have expanded dramatically over the past couple of years, and we need to choose among them carefully: some, like RSS, are straightforward and easy to adopt, but others (like blogs) will absorb a lot of staff time if they're to be used properly. True social media concepts will require something more – a change in outlook. Communications campaigns are used to controlling a message, but participatory media ask us to take a risk and rely on our supporters instead. It's a jump many will be reluctant to take, but one that's already rewarding those who do. cMR

## Wikis Express, Collaborate, Share, and Build Community

Think of wikis as a good tool to collect and share information, from lots of people, for lots of people. You can use them to write a manifesto together, to add names to a growing community list, or to keep a community archive of information.

[bethkanter.wordpress.com/  
web-20-guide/wiki/](http://bethkanter.wordpress.com/web-20-guide/wiki/)

## The Case for Content Management Systems

**W**HAT IS A content management system? In general terms, a “CMS” is a better and more integrated way for organizations to manage all of their online content – including their website, databases, documents, and files. It's a software system that integrates and manages different kinds of content.

More and more, nonprofits are moving all of their online content into these web-based hubs. In addition to the efficiencies that come with improved organization of data, these nonprofits are much better able to take advantage of the new web tools which are now available and which will greatly enhance their organization's work.

For community media centers, particularly as regards their websites, a move to a CMS offers profound benefits. A CMS-based website is entirely different than the traditional website and opens the doors to an entirely new and modern (i.e., web 2.0) level of functionality.

In the last year or two, many community media centers have migrated their websites to CMS systems (see sidebar, page 37).

Why? There are three main reasons:

- A CMS-based website offers a platform more suitable for web 2.0 tools. It supports the “participatory culture” that characterizes this new generation web. Interactive tools and an interactive site are consistent with the practices and philosophy of access. A CMS-based website fosters participation, collaboration, engagement, and builds community.
- A community media center, like all nonprofits, can benefit from the ease and simplicity of a CMS-based website. Once installed, anyone – everyone – on staff can maintain it. This avoids both the inconvenience and the cost of working with an outside web designer. Updates can be immediate, ensuring that website information remains current and relevant. It saves the organization money and is a more efficient use of resources – critical to all nonprofits.
- Finally, media centers, as “technology” leaders in their communities, need to model best practices. In order to retain credibility as the trusted, go-to source for today's media, they need to use today's tools. cMR

### Sources and Resources

**TechSoup** offers numerous articles about the whys and hows of CMSs: [www.techsoup.org/learningcenter](http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter)

**Idealware** provides candid reviews and articles about software of interest to nonprofits at [idealware.org](http://idealware.org). In particular, an article by Laura Quinn and Brett Bonfield compares open source CMSs: [www.idealware.org/articles/joomla\\_drupal\\_plone.php](http://www.idealware.org/articles/joomla_drupal_plone.php)

**Linux Journal** offers *Seven Strategies for Evaluating Open Source Content Management Systems*: [www.linuxjournal.com/article/8301](http://www.linuxjournal.com/article/8301)

**The CMS Matrix** compares all CMSs, including open source: [www.cmsmatrix.org](http://www.cmsmatrix.org)

# CMS Explained

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## You are not alone

You have a website. It has grown organically over time, and while it is very useful, it is far from perfect. Much of the content is out-of-date or inaccurate, it's hard to find things, updating the site is complex, and the appearance is becoming dated. Worse yet, you've lost track of all the pages on the site, and by having all the changes made by your skilled webmaster, the updates are piling up in their in-tray. If this sounds grim, you are not alone.

## How can a CMS help?

Every website needs up-to-date content, intuitive navigation, and a great design. And every site administrator wants to be able to get a website up quickly, make changes easily, and add new content with a minimum of effort. That's where a CMS comes in. A CMS does three things:

- makes it easier to get your website up and running – once you've designed exactly what will best serve your site visitors, of course
- promotes good website practice
- allows your non-technical staff members to make site updates easily

You can do all of this without a CMS, just as you can stay in touch with people without using email. But like email, a CMS can make your life a lot easier. 

*“We have a small but growing community of people who are authoring content on websites they are maintaining themselves with a minimum of technical assistance from us. They started with little to no knowledge of information architecture or web standards, and not only are they doing it, they're doing it well. Plone makes that possible.”*

 **Steve McMahon**  
Davis Community Network

## *PEGspace: Become a Part of the Web 2.0 Culture: Share, Vet, Contribute*

PEGspace is a partnership of the Alliance for Community Media and a number of community media centers to help fellow access operations best use the internet to further the mission of public media. PEGspace is based on the following core concepts:

- The internet will continue to grow in importance as a tool for advocacy, community outreach, and media.
- A content management system (CMS) is the best means for access centers to be effective in these areas.
- CMS tools and support need to be further developed to make them viable for most access centers.
- It is also important to develop PEG-specific programs designed to interface with the CMS.

- Access centers benefit if all such tools, support, and software development are open source, rather than proprietary.
- Everyone benefits if these tools, support, and software are built on the same platform.
- The platform of choice for the Alliance is Drupal, which is free, open source, and already has an active development community within the access movement.

Visit [www.pegspace.org](http://www.pegspace.org) to learn about the projects in development that will benefit all community media centers. It is an open partnership that welcomes your participation!



## Case Study: Californians Against Waste – “Numbers Don’t Lie...”

*This is a nonprofit success story. The use of a content management system style website has enabled CAW to build its capacity to meet its mission. This is useful for community media centers as they seek to build their own capacity, as well as help the nonprofits in their communities use media and technology tools to build theirs.*

*Twenty-seven year old Californians Against Waste, [www.cawrecycles.org](http://www.cawrecycles.org), is one of the nation’s leading nonprofit environmental research and advocacy organizations. CAW focuses on resource conservation and pollution prevention through waste reduction and recycling. Like most nonprofit organizations, its objectives are to (1) increase awareness for its work, (2) educate people and build support for its causes, (3) expand its membership base, (4) grow its financial coffers, and (5) boost its advocacy efforts to effect favorable legislation. To help achieve those objectives, CAW transitioned its website to a content management system a year and a half ago.*

*In a report to his board of directors in March of this year, Mark Murray, CAW executive director, wrote the following:*

*“Our website experienced a second month in a row of record growth, with 5591 unique visitors, up 10 percent from last month’s record 5150. And that is nearly a three-fold increase over*

*the 2112 visitors we had last February.*

	Jan 2007	Feb 2007
Unique visitors	5150	5591
Number of visits	7945	8313
Hits	143159	161716

*“Additionally, we raised \$2000 online in February, which is double the monthly average from 2006. In the first two months of 2007, we’ve raised nearly \$2500 online compared to \$550 for the entire first quarter of 2006.*

*“The [e-newsletter] Recycling Advocate is now being sent to approximately 2200 stakeholders.*

*“With the site averaging more than 5000 unique visitors every month [as of press time, visitors to the site approached 10,000 per month], we are clearly attracting a broader audience than in the past. But in order to keep them coming back and hopefully becoming activists and contributors, we need to provide them with fresh and informative content.*

*“For our online surveys, last year we were averaging around 150 respondents a month. Our last survey had over 700 respondents in two weeks.*

*“I again want to invite all of you to contribute content to the website. You can do it directly with the user name and password that we’ve provided you. The form of the content can be new items or comments in the forum section, as well as comments on existing web pages.”*

## CMS in Community Media: Who’s Doing It?

These community media organizations have migrated their existing sites to CMS sites. Some of the centers below are also teaching nonprofits in their communities how to plan and design their own CMSs.

Alliance for Community Media:  
[www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org)

Community Media Review:  
[communitymediareview.org](http://communitymediareview.org)

Manhattan Neighborhood Network, NY:  
[www.mnn.org](http://www.mnn.org)

WCCA TV 13, Worcester, MA:  
[www.wccatv.com](http://www.wccatv.com)

CCTV, Burlington, VT:  
[www.cctv.org](http://www.cctv.org)

Davis Community Network, CA:  
[www.dcn.org](http://www.dcn.org)

Cambridge Community Television, MA:  
[www.cctvcambridge.org](http://www.cctvcambridge.org)

**“Our website is an extension of our mission. At [wccatv.com](http://wccatv.com), anyone can register for free to post comments, start their own blog, post video and podcast. WCCA uses the site to present a real-time stream of our cable programming as well as offer programs for downloading. The site also offers a dynamic program schedule; a community event calendar, which is dynamically linked to other social websites; a media tool kit; a public access channel guide linking to other community access centers who stream content; and a window to contribute to and/or underwrite WCCA public access operations. The site is also multi-lingual and has RSS feed availability.”**

 **Mauro DePasquale**  
WCCA TV 13, “The People’s Channel”

# Free as in Speech: Tools for the Next Revolution

by Felicia Sullivan

**Felicia Sullivan** is executive director of Organizers' Collaborative ([organizers.collaborative.org](http://organizers.collaborative.org)) a Boston-based nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing social change through technology. Prior to joining OC, she worked at Lowell Telecommunications Corporation, a community media center in Lowell, MA. She speaks and writes frequently on issues of community communication in a connected age and the preservation of civic space in telecommunications.

Felicia can be reached at [fms@cove.com](mailto:fms@cove.com)

**A** LONG-TIME COLLEAGUE of mine, when talking about free software, always says, "You know, free as in speech not free as in beer." That is to say that free software is about liberty, not price. And when speaking about open source software, he refers to transparency and accessibility of the code that allows anyone to create and be involved. He marvels that both free and open source software (F/OSS) share the common dependency upon communities of developers and users to thrive – the ultimate "gift culture" in his estimation.

These concepts of freedom, transparency, accessibility, creativity, inclusion and community should sound familiar to those of us working in community media. They are the foundations of much of the work in which we are engaged. Therefore, we owe it to ourselves and to our communities to explore and be open to free and open source software. These applications may benefit our organizations and our citizens not because they cost so little, but because they provide us ultimate autonomy over our own futures in the realm of communications. They ensure that the workings of the system remain knowable and accountable. They prevent us from being dependent on outside forces and put us in the driver's seat. Controlling the code is the contemporary equivalent of controlling bandwidth and channel capacity.

So, what sorts of F/OSS applications should the well-equipped community media center have in its toolbox? Or, at least be conversant enough in to make informed decisions about its next round of communication infrastructure building?

## The Core

First and foremost are the set of "core" applications known as LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP). For those of you unfamiliar with Linux, it is an operating system like Windows VISTA or Mac OS X. It comes in a number of "flavors" such as Red Hat ([www.redhat.com](http://www.redhat.com)), Debi-

an ([www.debian.com](http://www.debian.com)) and Ubuntu ([www.ubuntu.com](http://www.ubuntu.com)). Like any operating system, it sets the environment in which all hardware and software operate. It is the user's primary control system.

Apache ([www.apache.com](http://www.apache.com)) is a web server application. Currently, over 62% of all web hosting applications are running from an Apache server system. System administrators who favor Apache often comment on the reliability and security of the software for the critical running of the internet.

Additionally, as an open source application, it ensures that the workings of a powerful communication system are accessible and transparent to us all. Add to the web environment a powerful database like MySQL ([www.mysql.com](http://www.mysql.com)) and dynamic content becomes possible. Everything from blogs, to shopping carts, to search engines depends upon data stored in a database such as MySQL. When coupled with a scripting language such as PHP ([www.php.net](http://www.php.net)), web content can now shift and change according to variable inputs. Basically, PHP allows the developer to write simple scripts that pull information out of a database or other locations and display within a basic web page. This allows content to be flexible and have multiple purposes.

If you aren't up to installing and configuring your own LAMP system, there are free and low-cost providers that use this core in their operations. I personally use *Dreamhost* ([www.dreamhost.com](http://www.dreamhost.com)). It comes with a very useable control panel and lots of nice one-click installs and easy to set up MySQL databases. *Grassroots.org* ([www.grassroots.org](http://www.grassroots.org)), *The Community Software Lab* ([www.thecsl.org](http://www.thecsl.org)) and *Riseup* ([www.riseup.net](http://www.riseup.net)) are all nonprofits that provide hosting in a F/OSS world for nonprofits and other community-based organizations. Why not check out your web hosting service and see if they support a F/OSS solution. It is a simple step to transforming control over your communications infrastructure.

## Desktop must-haves

While there are an increasing number of community media centers that have moved core web and operating system solutions to F/OSS, it can be a hard and somewhat scary proposition to make this shift as the first step toward conversion. Luckily, there are an increasing number of very user-friendly and useful free and/or open source applications available for the center that wants to explore simple ways to get involved.

Just like many of us don't go out and build a windmill for sustainable energy, it is feasible for us to replace incandescent light bulbs with more energy efficient compact fluorescents. Here are some useful desktop applications that are easy to download and install. They are just as good, and in some cases better, than their proprietary cousins (*see sidebar*).

## It's a matter of liberty, not price

There are countless other F/OSS applications that can be tested and used. Ap-

plications that can meet almost any need such as drawing (*Inkscape* – [www.inkscape.org](http://www.inkscape.org)), photo manipulation (*GIMP* – [www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org)), and audio/video editing (*NGO-in-a-Box* – [ngoainabox.org](http://ngoainabox.org)). Some are easy to use and install and others not so easy. Some cost little to nothing and some require the investment of time and financial resources. Some are completely useless.

The thing about choosing F/OSS for your information and communication needs is that it is like making the choice to recycle, buy fair-trade coffee, locally-grown produce, or be a member of your local community media center. It is a choice not just about the bottom line, but a choice that says we care about who controls important resources. It is not a fluke that so many of the resources detailed in this article have “.org” in their URLs. F/OSS is a stance about what kind of communication culture we want to create. Isn't this what the mission of community media is all about? **CMR**

## Desktop Must-Haves

### Web Browser

- Firefox  
[www.firefox.com](http://www.firefox.com)
- Flock  
[www.flock.com](http://www.flock.com)

### Office Application Suite

*Word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and more*

- Open Office  
[www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)

### Contact Relationship Management

*Used to manage people and their interactions with your organization*

- Organizers' Database\*  
[www.organizersdb.org](http://www.organizersdb.org)

*\*Disclaimer – the author of this article works for the organization that developed this software*

## F/OSS: Additional Resources

### Online Technology for Social Change: From Struggle to Strategy

[www.dotorganize.net/report/introduction](http://www.dotorganize.net/report/introduction)

This report compiles insights from more than 400 social change groups, technology providers, and nonprofit technology capacity builders, examining the needs of organizers working to utilize new technologies, and offering recommendations for how to meet those needs more effectively.

### International Free and Open Source Software Foundation

[www.ifoss.org](http://www.ifoss.org)

The International Free and Open Source Software Foundation (iFOSSF) is a nonprofit that seeks to accelerate the development and usage of information and communication technologies with free and open source software worldwide for sustained economic and social development, especially for the socially disadvantaged.

### Nonprofit Open Source Initiative

[www.nosi.net](http://www.nosi.net)

NOSI is an organization that was started for two purposes: to facilitate and encourage the use of open source software in the nonprofit sector, and to bring nonprofits and open source developers and projects together, because the ethos of both are often so consonant with each other.

### The Cathedral & the Bazaar

[www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar](http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar)

This seminal book by Eric S. Raymond addresses the benefits and competitive advantage of open source software for contemporary culture.

### Penguin Day

[www.penguinday.org](http://www.penguinday.org)

At local Penguin Days, nonprofit organizations explore the range of issues and options involved using free and open source software. Find or sponsor a Penguin Day in your community.

### Free Software Foundation

[www.fsf.org](http://www.fsf.org)

The Free Software Foundation (FSF) is dedicated to promoting computer users' rights to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer programs. The FSF promotes the development and use of free software, particularly the GNU operating system, used widely in its GNU/Linux variant.

### Revolution OS

[www.revolution-os.com](http://www.revolution-os.com)

REVOLUTION OS tells the inside story of the hackers who rebelled against the proprietary software model and Microsoft to create GNU/Linux and the open source movement.

# The Email Savvy Organization

by Michael C. Gilbert

**The Gilbert Center** ([www.gilbert.org](http://www.gilbert.org)) works to support and empower the people and organizations who are changing the world for the better.

Michael C. Gilbert is an internationally known consultant to foundations and nonprofits. He is the author of *THE GUIDE TO NONPROFIT EMAIL* and was the founding president of the Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN).

This excerpt is reprinted with permission from *Nonprofit Online News*, [www.nonprofitnews.org/features](http://www.nonprofitnews.org/features)

*"Email Is More Important Than My Website"*

"I have been recommending 'Three Rules of Email' to help nonprofit organizations develop a genuine internet strategy and avoid being seduced by their own web presence:

**Rule #1:** Resources spent on email strategies are more valuable than the same resources spent on web strategies.

**Rule #2:** A website built around an email strategy is more valuable than a website that is built around itself.

**Rule #3:** Email-oriented thinking will yield better strategic thinking overall."

— Michael Gilbert,  
excerpted from  
the *EMAIL MANIFESTO*  
[www.nonprofitnews.org/gem](http://www.nonprofitnews.org/gem)

THERE IS SUCH A THING as the Email Savvy Organization and it's possible to identify the systems and practices that characterize it. What roles do these practices play? How do they fit together? How are they put to use by the Email Savvy Organization?

## Collecting email addresses

Nonprofit organizations that don't blink an eye when someone calls them on the phone to express their interest seem to have difficulty understanding that this is exactly what collecting email addresses on a website does for them, only much more efficiently. The offering of an email address is the first level of "permission" offered by a new stakeholder – the permission to correspond.

## Publishing email newsletters

The overwhelming majority of nonprofits (71% in our survey) publish paper newsletters and, no doubt, some proportion of the rest do a fair amount of postal correspondence. Any organization that has stakeholders (donors, volunteers, activists, clients, and others) needs to do more than just ask them to do things – it needs to build those relationships by keeping people informed.

Email brings down the cost of keeping stakeholders informed. An email newsletter is an organized and predictable form of communication that is not too personal for the level of relationship that exists when someone has first offered their email address.

Email newsletters take many different forms. Often, but not always, low tech is best, with plain text messages and links

back to the organization's website, if needed. Short newsletters that are delivered with greater frequency are more powerful relationship building tools than long newsletters which cannot be skimmed or read quickly.

## Surveying stakeholders

Part of relationship building is learning more about a person as time goes on. The representative practice of that process is surveying stakeholders online, discovering their interests and their preferences, and allowing them to shape the nature of the ongoing communication.

The key to learning about stakeholders is to have preferences, survey answers, and other behaviors

that express something useful, entered into the nonprofit organization's records in a structured manner. The structure provided by web forms and similar tools can, when well thought out, provide the basis for increasingly personal communication.

## Email fundraising

The ability to accept credit card donations online is not fundraising. It's more like having a checking account. A checking account makes it easier for people to give you money when they have decided to do so.

Fundraising is the age old combination of relationship building and asking, in an endless loop of deeper and deeper engagement. The internet makes both relationship building and asking possible on a much larger scale and at a much lower cost than through other media. Email, as a medium for "the ask" (as professional fundraisers call it), is a preferred practice for the Email Savvy Organization.

*"Email is an existing online tool that can be put to even better use if it is part of your communications strategy. Nonprofits now use email to improve their outreach, promotion and fundraising efforts – community media centers can do it too!"*



## Email strategy

Strategy is what pulls everything together. An email strategy answers specific questions for an organization: What is the path toward greater and greater engagement for a stakeholder?

Astute observers will realize that what really belongs in the center of the diagram is a complete, cross-media communication strategy (not merely an “email strategy”), which integrates the power of email, as well as the power of other communication tools.

**T**O THE EXTENT that nonprofit organizations have not integrated email into the management of their stakeholder relationships, they remain profoundly disconnected.

These practices, when combined into a continual loop of communication with their stakeholders and integrated into a full communication strategy, provides nonprofits with a framework for building relationships with stakeholders in a way that truly capitalizes on the advantages of the internet. **CMR**

## The Email Savvy Organization

- collects email addresses on its website, often on the front page
- publishes one or more email newsletters to its stakeholders
- can survey its stakeholders online and capture that information
- can raise money through email
- has an email strategy

[www.nonprofitnews.org/savvy](http://www.nonprofitnews.org/savvy)

## How to Raise Money with Email

*Funding for PEG is becoming increasingly threatened and community media centers are looking for new sources of income. Email and the web offer new venues for fundraising, and nonprofits are getting increasingly inventive in using these platforms. Email, as Michael Gilbert pointed out in the previous article, is a powerful, underutilized resource. NTEN's Michael Stein interviewed Madeline Stanionis about how to be effective raising money through email. Madeline is the author of, THE MERCIFULLY BRIEF REAL WORLD GUIDE TO RAISING THOUSANDS (IF NOT TENS OF THOUSANDS) OF DOLLARS WITH EMAIL. The full interview can be found at [nten.org/blog/2006/01/11/interview-with-madeline-stanionis](http://nten.org/blog/2006/01/11/interview-with-madeline-stanionis).*

**NTEN:** *How can a nonprofit get started?*

**Madeline:** I don't think that raising money online is rocket science. It's a modern form of direct marketing, whose goal is to encourage someone to act with their heart and their mind and their pocketbook.

**NTEN:** *What kind of systems should nonprofits have in place?*

**Madeline:** I think it means at the very least a system for sending out email, a system for storing the names on your list, and a system for collecting online donations. By integrated I mean that the various modules work in concert together. The donation processing works together with the email messaging, which is connected to the advocacy or the events. You should be able to quickly send a follow-up email based on a response that someone made on your donation or volunteer page.

**NTEN:** *A lot of online learning in 2005 came from natural disasters. How do you apply that learning more broadly?*

**Madeline:** It's all about the timing, which I devote a whole chapter to. Some nonprofits might say that their agency is not going to have a crisis like a hurricane, but organizations have crises all the time. You can't work in a nonprofit and not have something happen: the water main broke, someone broke in, we can't make payroll, we didn't get a grant we wanted. The key is developing a relationship with your constituency such that when something bad happens – or when you can celebrate something great – that they're there for you, that people will rally around your cause. That's where the timing comes in. So, for example, your agency didn't get the grant you needed, and it's going to make the difference for opening the summer camp for kids, and you need to raise \$30,000 in three weeks so you can open your doors – that's a crisis, that's a perfect opportunity. The key is to be ready for it, by having those relationships built, and having your systems in place.

**NTEN:** *In the book, you also devote a fair amount of time to the human systems that influence online fundraising.*

**Madeline:** It is important to be honest, heartfelt and immediate when raising money with email. It's important that email appeals come from real people and that they have real emotion.

# Analytics for the Little Guys

by Daniell Krawczyk

*Two immediate disclosures:*

*First, this article is about using Google Analytics, which is only one of many options available for analyzing your traffic.*

*Second, I'm relatively ignorant when it comes to server logs, so if you know even the littlest bit about the subject, you're a bigger expert than I. Feel free to scoff at anything you think deserves it.*

– DK

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Daniell can be found at most access conferences speaking about digital distribution or can be reached at [dkrawc@gmail.com](mailto:dkrawc@gmail.com)

IT'S COMMONLY SAID about the audience of any given PEG channel: "How many watch is less important than who watches," referring to the fact that access programming is often produced for members of a very particular community. A Vietnamese talk show might not be the most watched program on the cable system, but if it reaches the local Vietnamese community it has a great value to the community. The total audience of a program on veterans' affairs may not be huge, but the information delivered to veterans can be important and have a huge impact. Unfortunately, when it comes to getting real statistical data on who is watching our channels, there's really no way to get either piece of information delivered to us on a pie-chart. Instead, we rely on anecdotal evidence such as "grocery store ratings" or the number of people who call when the program doesn't air due to technical difficulties.

When we turn to the web, we enter a completely different scenario, one where numbers abound. Server logs can tell us exactly how many hits we've had and those skilled in analyzing them are able to discern great truths using their mystical spreadsheets and shell scripts. These IT-geniuses can generate hundreds of pie-charts and bar graphs showing where the traffic flows, but the rest of us "unwashed masses" just see a string of numbers. (If you don't know what a shell script is, you

belong with with me in the second category.)

However, if you don't mind giving Google ownership over one more chunk of your valuable information, you can use its free Google Analytics service to close the gap between you and the trained professionals. By simply adding a special block of code to each page of your web system, you can automatically generate more geo-maps and pie-charts than you can print. While initial impulses will lead you to look at your totals (unique visitors, page visits), you can easily cross-reference other categories of information to turn up interesting information on *who* is using your

website. This is especially revealing for those of us with low-traffic websites as we can learn exactly where our visitors are coming from and how they find us.

To give a personal example of analytics in action: My own site ([dkrawc.com](http://dkrawc.com)) is extremely low-traffic (~2 visitors per day), and for the most part, I've always been able to guess who was leaving me comments on my blog posts. However, last Fall I discovered that a group of middle-school students was using the comments thread of a blog post to taunt each other (and eventually me). Google Analytics was implemented shortly after the comments first appeared and using the Geo-Map and clues from their comments I was able to determine that the kids were attending Canberra Grammar School in Australia. Furthermore, by cross-referencing the visits from Australia with referral keywords, I discovered that they found my site by googling "South Korea average bandwidth."

Now, imagine using these tools in conjunction with your own website and imagine the information you might turn up. When you find that you have visitors from the other side of the world you can

“Who are you, and what are you doing on my website?”

determine whether they were looking for a particular program, the name of your channel, or something completely unexpected. You may see that you have local visitors who find your station through your profile on *MappingAccess.com* or you may see that you are consistently getting visitors from a town with the same name in a different state who are looking for their access center. A more creative use involves creating a special URL or search phrase and putting it in a print campaign. By tracking people who find your site by searching that phrase or entering that

URL, you can determine the effectiveness of that print campaign and learn more about the people who respond.

In the end, while programming our channels can often feel like a shot in the dark, information on who is using our website only needs to be interpreted and cross-referenced to be illuminating. While the tech-geniuses among us might choose to manipulate the raw data themselves, services like *Google Analytics* make it easy for the ignorant to figure out the eternal question: “Who are you and what are you doing on my website?” **cMr**

## Let Your Values Be Your Guide

by Jennifer Harris

**T**HE WEB 2.0 WORLD has an assortment of enticing sweets that is sure to tempt the community-building sweet-tooth of any nonprofit. At this time, many directors certainly have visions of blogs, analytics tools and social networks dancing in their heads. As community media centers decide just how they can have their television-cake and eat the internet too (so to speak), they must understand that there are limits in this virtual candy store. Community media advocates must choose their tools carefully and consciously, because while in some circles, “web 2.0” is becoming synonymous with “community,” old media habits die hard. As the lure of the mainstream, as well as the need for financial stability, becomes undeniable for some of these second generation sites, the risk of losing their community identity increases. A window currently exists for community media advocates to set a new media agenda that extends the knowledge of real world community-builders into new media territory.

Second-generation sites are already beginning to feel the tightening grip of old media models and methods. *Google*, capitalizing on the growth of the data collection market, via their *Google Analytics* and *Google Earth* programs can aggregate, store, and analyze vast amounts of personal search history and serve it up to advertisers hungry for eyeballs and atten-

tion. The Electronic Frontier Foundation recently filed a lawsuit regarding *YouTube* inappropriately censoring content to appease Viacom, even though the content fell within the bounds of fair use. The trend of businesses’ interests crowding online community spaces continues: social networking sites are becoming increasingly inundated with advertisements; meet up groups are now commonly sponsored by major product campaigns, and; in the virtual world, *Second Life*, major brands such as Coke, Toyota, Adidas, and even Reuters have already erected virtual identities. *YouTube* may be about “you” and *MySpace* may still feel like yours, but how much longer will the 2.0 world collectively allow real communities to flourish?

This is not to say that any 2.0 service should be avoided, but rather they should more strategically be programmed with regard to the public interest. Commercials have long since been enemy number one for many alternative media advocates. The theory is that if commercial television channels worked as hard to serve the public as they did their advertisers, then the programming would instead reflect the needs of the public above the desires of the advertisers. However, while commercials not appearing in the public access space may send a clear message in the analog world, this absence will more than likely not send as strong a signal in the digital

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“A window currently exists for community media advocates to set a new media agenda that extends the knowledge of real world community-builders into new media territory.”

world. A new strategy that utilizes all vehicles for encouraging community building will need to be adopted when taking community media into the next generation.

Community media values should exist on all new media platforms and community media centers have the opportunity to become the digital ambassadors. Producers are crucial assets in programming these new technologies with content that is conscious about matters of diversity, civic responsibility, and other under-represented issues. Imagine a co-operative of local, public-minded organizations (including your local independent newspaper and/or radio station, arts, environmental, civic, human rights organizations, etc.) that builds a cohesive online presence that becomes the epicenter for social consciousness and “the place to go” to create change within your community. To create the social change that community media is perpetually striving for, it is not going to be enough to simply be a “.org” with a blog. The online world is a massive – and growing – collection of content. As methods for search become more specialized and personalized, it is increasingly important for there to be options besides product place-

ments, commercials, and ads rising to the top. Where is the online network that promotes causes rather than stuff, places ideas before sales pitches, and prioritizes value above popularity?

Just because the buzz around 2.0 communities is at times deafening, it doesn't mean that the need for real world community builders and shapers becomes obsolete. It is important now more than ever to have those with experience in creating communities to cultivate this area. Of course there are many 2.0 services such as *Craig's List*, *Wikipedia*, and countless blogs that consciously advance community building and not simply co-opt the language. They are tools that should aid community builders, but should not be relied upon to build communities. Our role is to make sure that the online communities being built today don't become the “captive audiences” of tomorrow. If the 2.0 world doesn't realize the potential of community-building, for reasons other than entertainment and commerce, then new media might as well take its place with old media. We must start building our new media community now or not be surprised when there is no place for us when it is built. **CMR**

### *Case Study: Good Cause – “Cable Television + Web = Greater Impact”*

**Good Cause** uses its community media center to produce a monthly program highlighting its services and special events. Two of its staff members have been trained and certified to borrow cameras, produce, and edit shows.

Until recently, Good Cause faxed press releases to newspapers and radio stations, made and distributed flyers, and published notices in its quarterly newsletter. It hoped that a large audience would tune in on the right day and time to watch its programs, and that its programs would inspire people to support its work and get involved.

More recently, Good Cause started using web-based tools to amplify its cable access efforts and ensure the largest possible audience for its programs. Through its strategic communications planning, Good Cause knows its audience, and it has learned that many of the people it serves rely on the internet for information about its programs. It has updated its methods to serve its stakeholders better.

In promoting its cable TV program, Good Cause staff consult their “constituent database” and use email and text messaging to alert their “social networks” (members, clients, board, staff, benefactors, press) about

each program and its airtime. The email messages also direct supporters to Good Cause's website where a short video segment is posted for quick viewing. The web link reminds viewers of the program's airtime and links to an action alert. Good Cause's PSAs can be found on its own website, on *blip.tv*, and at video “aggregator” sites like *Democracy Player* ([www.getdemocracy.com](http://www.getdemocracy.com)). Website visitors can donate, volunteer, call a policy maker and/or tell-a-friend – all with the click of a button.

Good Cause also compresses each program it broadcasts into smaller digital files that staff can upload easily to the web. Staff uploads the programs to *blip.tv* (where storage and bandwidth are free), and tags them using selected keywords so the programs will be easier for the public to find. Good Cause supporters are alerted automatically through RSS as soon as the new program is posted.

Good Cause uses short online surveys and hosts online forums to collect feedback on its programs as well as other aspects of its operations. It uses web analytics to determine how people use the Good Cause website, and to see how often each show is viewed, shared, or downloaded. It updates its site often to meet stakeholder interests.



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# The Last Word

**F**OR THE PAST THREE DECADES, media centers have worked to build community by helping individuals and organizations produce television programs for airing on cable access channels. Through this process, people are empowered to express opinions and ideas, and distribute information. And through this sharing, the community is enriched by learning about diverse people and points of view.

The key message of “Community Media 2.0” is that today’s media centers are now able to *amplify* that effort by applying a new set of interactive, digital tools to spread the stories farther and have even greater social impact.

We concluded this issue of CMR with a look at *Good Cause* (see previous page) – a typical (but fictitious) organizational member of a community media center. What can they expect from a CMC that is making the transition to the web 2.0 world? Good Cause was able to effectively target and vastly enhance the audience for its shows through thoughtful communications planning and the use of new web-based tools. A greater audience will very likely lead to greater awareness for Good Cause’s work, increased support, participation, and action that will enhance Good Cause’s impact in the community.

And Good Cause is just one member of the community media center. Imagine what can happen if we teach all of our members how to leverage online tools to enhance democracy and effect social change. Imagine what kind of community we can build.

As we wrap up this issue, we leave you with this thought: media centers for 30 years have accumulated significant capital – they are experts in the art of community building; they have cultivated significant relationships with the diverse members of the community

family; they have earned a spot at the intersection of technology and communication and become the trusted source for media education and media as a community building tool. Media centers are the hubs of community life, connecting people with stories, and stories with people. They are in a perfect position to leverage those strengths – very unique assets – as technology marches forward. The technologies and tools of 2.0 offer both an effective way to extend the power and reach of our current television programming AND open up an entirely new world of networked media possibilities. Exciting and revolutionary, indeed!

Finally, community media centers will need to expand their notions of, and open their minds to, what community media can be in this new participatory media culture. It will not be enough to simply expand our tool box to include new web-based tools. We’ll need to rethink our strategies for engaging and having an impact on our communities with media, as we expand from a tv-centric to a network-centric world.



The guest editors would like to thank the Surdna Foundation and the A.D. Henderson Foundation for their support of research in strategic communications for nonprofits. We thank NTEN and each and every one of our other “Community Media 2.0” contributors for graciously showing us the way forward.

We hope that you will be inspired by this issue to build the healthy communities and healthy democracies of our future.

*Lauren-Glenn Davitian & Kari Peterson*

**“W**e must choose the next step. What percentage of your PEG resources could be dedicated to the new tools and training needed by our communities? Consider the value in repurposing our video for media other than cable channels. Determine what investments in new media can be combined with our existing bandwidth to multiply its value to the community.”

 *Anthony Riddle*

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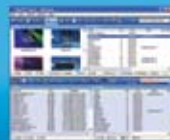
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